

Ontological Subordination in Novatian of Rome's Theology of the Son

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ONTOLOGICAL SUBORDINATION IN NOVATIAN OF ROME'S
THEOLOGY OF THE SON

By

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ABSTRACT
ONTOLOGICAL SUBORDINATION IN NOVATIAN OF ROME'S
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Marquette University, 2012

This dissertation evaluates Novatian of Rome's theology of the Son in his *De Trinitate*. It argues that Novatian presents the Son as ontologically subordinate to the Father, which is not a conclusion shared by a majority of recent scholars. This conclusion is reached by comparing Novatian's presentation of the Father's divinity with that of the Son. The first half of this work, therefore, demonstrates the manner by which Novatian affirms that the Father is transcendent, supreme, and unique in His attributes. Novatian employs a range of concepts and terms found in Christian and non-Christian sources. Specifically, I present and analyze Novatian's indebtedness to technical terminology of divine ontology and divine attributes which were common to his intellectual environment, especially in Middle Platonism. I show that Novatian expresses the Father's transcendence through negative theology, but also acknowledges an array of necessary attributes such as oneness and simplicity.

Novatian's understanding of the Son's nature depends on his conviction that the Father alone is supreme in all of His divine attributes. The arguments Novatian assembles to identify the Son as God do not suggest that the Son's divinity is based on the idea of equality with the Father. In some respects, Novatian takes over subordinationist themes in the Word Christology tradition, which was highly influential to his perspective. This study shows that when Novatian turns his attention to a comparison of the Son's divine nature with that of the Father, his emphasis on the Father's uniqueness and supremacy act as the lens by which he speaks of the Son's attributes. Although Novatian embraces the Son's derivation from the Father in terms of a shared substance (what I identify as an ontological connection/relationship), he consistently speaks of the Son's attributes as diminished and less than the Father's. This dissertation attempts to correct the false impression that theological philosophy played a minor role, or no role at all, on Novatian's thought. Novatian's theology of the Son is both consistent and sophisticated because of his articulation of the Son's ontological subordination to the Father.

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Daniel Lloyd, B.A., M.T.S.

My understanding of what a dissertation is has changed since the time when I entered graduate school. My perception had been that a dissertation amounted to a very long paper. In fact, the experience has colored the way I tend to think of all topics. The time which I have spent in Marquette's program encompasses the most significant period of my adult life. This work coincides with the beginning of my marriage and the raising of two children. Now all of my experiences are in some ways inseparable.

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My decision to pursue an academic post surely witnesses to the fact that I have a great love for school and study. Such a love rarely develops, I would think, without a predominantly positive experience with teachers. I am no exception to this experience, and I am happy to take the opportunity to offer my thanks to all of my teachers, from all of my previous schools. I would also like to thank one teacher in particular: Prof. Glen Johnson introduced me to the Fathers and helped me to see the unbreakable unity of the faith community across time. He is one of the best teachers I have had over these many years.

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Finally, I would like to express my limitless gratitude to my wife, Amy. Her support in all things has made this work possible and meaningful. She is simply incomparable as a wife, mother, and companion. In addition, and despite supporting our

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
An.	<i>The Soul</i>
ANF	The Ante-Nicene Fathers
Apol.	<i>1 and 2 Apologies</i>
ATR	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
Aug.	<i>Augustinianum</i>
AugStud	<i>Augustinian Studies</i>
Autol.	<i>To Autolycus</i>
Cels.	<i>Against Celsus</i>
CH	<i>Church History</i>
<i>De deo Socr.</i>	<i>De deo Socratico</i>
Dial.	<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>
Did.	<i>Didaskalikos</i>
<i>Dogm. Plat.</i>	<i>De dogma Platonis</i>
DRev	<i>Downside Review</i>
DTC	<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i>
EC	<i>Enciclopedia Cattolica</i>
ETL	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
FC	Fathers of the Church
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
Greg	<i>Gregorianum</i>
Haer.	<i>Against Heresies</i>
Herm.	<i>Against Hermogenes</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ILC	<i>Illinois Classical Studies</i>
ITQ	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
Marc.	<i>Against Marcion</i>
Mund.	<i>De mundo</i>
NAPS	North American Patristics Society
<i>Nat. d.</i>	<i>De natura deorum</i>
Noet.	<i>Contra Noetum</i>
NRTh	<i>La Nouvelle Revue Théologique</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NV	<i>Nova et Vetera</i>
Prax.	<i>Adversus Praxean</i>
REAug.	<i>Revue des Études Augustiniennes</i>
Ref.	<i>Refutation of All Heresies</i>
RSPT	<i>Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques</i>
StPatr	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
ST	<i>Studia Theologica</i>

<i>S.V.F.</i>	<i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i>
<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>
<i>USQR</i>	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Introduction

I began this dissertation with the intent of analyzing Novatian's Christological anthropology and eschatology in his *De Trinitate* (hereafter *Trin.*). My conclusions about these topics derive from my understanding that Novatian teaches the ontological subordination of the Son to the Father. By ontological subordination, I mean that Novatian treats the Son as having a divine nature or divine attributes which are unequal to those of the Father, the Supreme God. My understanding of Novatian's ontological subordination comes from my analysis of Novatian's interaction with the theological philosophy of his time as well as his articulation of the Word Christology tradition. However, my board helped me to realize that Novatian's ontological subordination of the Son to the Father is itself the scope of a dissertation. In its current form, this dissertation investigates the framework by which Novatian maintains the Father's transcendence through the Son's activities and immanence in the world, and I will demonstrate that Novatian achieves this dynamic by teaching the Son's ontological subordination. At a later date, I will use this project as the necessary springboard with which to evaluate Novatian's theological anthropology and eschatology.

I conclude in this dissertation that Novatian presents a sophisticated theology of the Son based on a Christology resembling that of Justin. Too often, scholars have attempted to peg Novatian's theology within the confines of a description either as an orthodox advancement or a regression of Tertullian's Trinitarian and Christological theology. Although Tertullian's work plays a significant influence on Novatian's theology, Novatian's thought should be presented according to its own structure. This structure arises from Novatian's emphasis on the distinction of the Father as unique and

supreme. The manner by which Novatian formulates his theology of the Son takes into account Tertullian's theology of the Son as well as of the Trinity. However, Novatian rejects some of Tertullian's positions, especially those which respond to the Sabellian crisis by articulating a unity of the divine persons in a way which advances Trinitarian concerns over the uniqueness of the Father. This in no way makes Novatian's theology less sophisticated than Tertullian's. I will show that Novatian prefers some of Tertullian's formulations from his earlier works, and I will read Novatian within the context of his interaction with theological philosophy and Christian sources. With his emphasis on articulating the divine transcendence of the Father with the divine immanence of the Son, one could make the case that Novatian's theology is a sophisticated version of Justin's theology.¹ The scholarship which presents Novatian's theology as a regression or a simplification of Tertullian's thought has failed to accurately describe the structure and content of *Trin* in light of the broader Christological tradition.

The Roman Environment and Novatian's Sources

During the second century and the first half of the third, Rome was one of the critical crossroads of theological reflection and development, with many prominent figures living in or having direct contact with the Roman community. Persons whose writings we still possess include Hermas, Justin Martyr, Tatian, and Hippolytus. Other significant theological figures, such as Marcion, Valentinus, Basilides, and Sabellius, also

¹ In chapter 5, I will provide an overview of Word Christology traditions of those theologians known to Novatian. I will show that Justin grounds his Christology on the properties of the Father's unique transcendence, and I will point to similarities between Justin and Novatian's theological positions in chapters 6 and 7.

lived in Rome. In addition to contributing to the foundations of the Roman theological environment, many of these authors also spread their influence throughout the Christian communities of the Mediterranean and beyond.² Conversely, important works by Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Tertullian of Carthage were read in Rome.³ By the second half of the third century many theological works travelled to major cities throughout the Roman Empire. In this respect, Rome was a theological center, both influencing and also being influenced by other Christian communities.

There is little dispute about the primary sources on which Novatian relied. These include Justin, Theophilus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and possibly Irenaeus. Scholars have also identified Cicero, Seneca, and Apuleius as prominent philosophers whom Novatian utilized.⁴

The Hippolytian corpus presents a challenge for analyzing the influence it may have had on Novatian. Studies about Hippolytus and the works which should be attributed to him, his school, or to multiple authors are contentious. For the purposes of my project, the *Refutation of All Heresies* (hereafter *Ref.*) and the *Contra Noetum* (hereafter *Noet.*) are the most significant works in terms of the probable influence on Novatian. Most scholars now accept the idea that multiple authors penned, and perhaps edited, the Hippolytean corpus. Though reaching different conclusions, two of the most

² Peter Lampe discusses many of these figures in their Roman context in *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*. Trans. by Michael Steinhauser. Ed. by Marshall D. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

³ Hippolytus, for example, catalogs the teachings of numerous heretical sects and groups, and he also discusses Irenaeus' comments against Marcus, in *Refutation of All Heresies* (hereafter *Ref.*) 6.37 and 50. He also mentions Tatian and Justin in *Ref.* 8.9. As I will discuss below, Novatian seems to have been influenced by Justin, Theophilus, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and others.

⁴ See, for example, Jean Daniélou, *The Development of Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea*. Vol. 3, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*. Translated and edited by John Austin Baker (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977), 233-250.

recent proponents of multiple authorship are A. Brent and J. A. Cerrato.⁵ Brent argues that the *Ref.* was written by Hippolytus' predecessor in a school or church opposed to Callistus and his successors.⁶ According to Brent, Hippolytus went on to write *Noet.* as the final representative of the school begun by the author of the *Ref.* Cerrato, on the other hand, attributes *Ref.* to a Roman named Hippolytus and the *Noet.* to an Easterner with the same name. In Cerrato's analysis, the *Ref.* and the *Noet.* do not stand in a line of theological succession. Brent believes they do, yet he argues his position by suggesting that the theology of *Ref.* differs from that of Hippolytus, the author of *Noet.*⁷ It was a rejection of Callistus' practices which led Hippolytus to modify *Ref.* and write *Noet.* with the definite purpose of theological rapprochement.⁸ Brent therefore sees *Ref.* as the first work of a school which later made strides to accommodate some of Callistus' positions. A final consensus on these issues appears unlikely in the near future.⁹

I will avoid the foregoing controversy for the following reasons. First, the *Ref.*'s Roman's provenance is not in dispute. It contains all the valuable evidence for the theological quarrel between the author of the *Ref.* and Callistus, bishop of Rome. Second, although *Noet.* may eventually be accepted as originating in the East,¹⁰ it

⁵ Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension Before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop*. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, Vol. 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1995); J. A. Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West: The Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁶ This is a position Ronald Heine tentatively accepts, identifying the author as Hippolytus for convenience. See his "The Christology of Callistus," *JTS* 49:1 (April, 1998): 56-91.

⁷ Brent discusses the scholarship, beginning with Nautin (1947), which rejects single authorship based upon stylistic differences, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church*, 206 fn. 4. Brent, however, agrees with those who see the style as indicative of "a single author or with two different authors within the same school," 206. On largely theological grounds, Brent concludes multiple authors wrote the works.

⁸ *Ibid.* 210-212.

⁹ For a summary of the scholarly debates on authorship and theology see Robert Butterworth's *Hippolytus of Rome: Contra Noetum* (London: Heythrop College, University of London, 1977), chapter 1.

¹⁰ I suggest that Novatian does know *Noet.* and borrows the idea of the simultaneity of the Father's demiurgic will with the instantaneous production of whatever He wills. See chapter 6, "The Word's Obedience as Minister of the Father's Will."

nevertheless represents an important parallel witness to the theological controversies in Rome and the West in general.¹¹ Tertullian's *Adversus Praxean* (hereafter *Prax.*) has often been cited as a source for *Noet.* for a variety of reasons. These reasons include shared points of structure and common points of theology.¹² Furthermore, *Noet.*'s theology depends on Scripture and philosophy in a way similar to *Ref.* and Tertullian's works. *Noet.* also appears to combat a kind of theology, which if it is not from the same group opposed by Tertullian, the author of *Ref.*, and even Novatian, then it is nearly identical. This last point helps to explain why scholars often identify the provenance of *Noet.* as Rome.¹³ Finally, it is important to note that Novatian is the first author in Rome to write a theological treatise in Latin.¹⁴ I make this point to emphasize the fact that Novatian's intellectual dependencies are wider than the more easily identified linguistic parallels with other Latin authors.

¹¹ In a similar though not analogous way, Heine, following the work of Hagemann and others, views the first two books of Origen's *Commentary on John* as an important witness to the rejection of monarchian theology articulated in Rome. Heine suggests that the first two books, probably written shortly after Origen's trip to Rome, reflect something of the theological currents which he witnessed while in Rome, "Christology of Callistus," 57-58.

¹² So, for example, Ernest Evans determines that the presentation in *Noet.* of a scriptural refutation of Noetus' theology relies on Tertullian: "Throughout this section the influence of Tertullian is evident, the method of approach and even the phraseology being identical," *Tertullian's Treatise against Praxeas* (London: S.P.C.K., 1948), 23. Cf. Brent who reads *Noet.* as a theology of rapprochement with the community of Callistus and as consequently overturning important aspects of the Trinitarian and Christological theologies of Justin, Theophilus, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus, in *Hippolytus and the Roman Church*, 210-217.

¹³ I have not made a final decision about the provenance of the *Noet.*, even in light of my suggestion that Novatian borrows from it. This however does not affect my use of this work as a comparative tool for assessing both the monarchian theology as well as the Logos theology inherited and uniquely articulated by Novatian. None of my arguments about Novatian's Christology and theology stand or fall on a dependence to the witness of the *Noet.* in Novatian's work. Regardless, *Noet.* remains a valuable articulation of 3rd century theology.

¹⁴ Russell J. DeSimone, *The Treatise of Novatian the Roman Presbyter on the Trinity. A Study of the Text and the Doctrine* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum, 1970), 7.

The Content of De Trinitate

Novatian's *Trin.* offers a lengthy theological explanation of the *regula* (or *regula fidei*),¹⁵ and was written probably sometime in the 240's.¹⁶ G. D. Dunn, for example, notes, "What gives the work its structure is the fact that Novatian was commenting on and explaining the rule of truth (*regula veritatis*) as preserved in the early Roman church's baptismal symbol of faith."¹⁷ Throughout the treatise, Novatian describes the faith of the Church as expressing: 1) the transcendent, supreme, and one God who is the Father, 2) how the Son of God, who is the Word and Jesus, is the instrument of demiurgic activity and the personal fulfillment of the prophecies, and 3) how the Holy Spirit empowers the Church with gifts that lead its members into eternal salvation.

The first eight chapters of *Trin.* detail Novatian's theology of the Father. The majority of the rest of the work concerns Novatian's argument that the Son is both God and man.¹⁸ His theological predecessors, Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Tertullian,

¹⁵ Basing his work on C. P. Caspari's, Adhémar D'Alès summarizes the elements of Novatian's *regula*, in *Novatien. Etude sur la theologie romaine au milieu du III siècle* (Paris, 1924), 135-137. For other versions of the *regula*, see also Irenaeus's *Haer.* 1.1.1, 3.3.2, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 6, and Tertullian's *Prax.* 2. In regard to the version of the *regula* which Tertullian states in his *Prescriptions against Heretics* (*Praescr.*) 13, Jean Daniélou writes, "This is a particularly valuable text because it provides us with the full content of the 'rule of faith' at the time of Tertullian. It is in fact a summary of the Christian catechetical tradition which came from the apostles and which was handed down by the churches. All that was required of the Christian was that he should adhere to and believe in this traditional rule of faith," in *The Development of Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea*. Vol. 3, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*. Translated and edited by John Austin Baker (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977), 186.

¹⁶ For the dating of *Trin.*, see DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 43-44; James Leonard Papandrea, *The Trinitarian Theology of Novatian of Rome: A study in third-century orthodoxy* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2008), 44-47.

¹⁷ Geoffrey D. Dunn, "The Diversity and Unity of God in Novatian's *De Trinitate*," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 28:4 (Dec. 2002), 390.

¹⁸ Papandrea, quoting a phrase from Pierre De Labriolle, states, "The purpose of Novatian's so-called *De Trinitate* is not really to explain the Trinity. It is clear from the abbreviated treatment given the Spirit that Novatian's intent was not so much to systematize Trinitarian theology, as it was to explain, 'the relationship of the Son to the Father.' In other words, the *De Trinitate* is primarily a christological treatise, for which Novatian uses the Rule of Faith as his outline, and in which he gives attention to those christological issues which were at the time a matter of debate within the church," *Trinitarian Theology*,

wrote extensively about the Son of God. For these authors, the Son was the Word of God, distinct from the Father, and the one who had joined Himself to humanity in the Incarnation. These authors all expressed various forms of what scholars label the Word Christology tradition. This tradition accounts for more than simply an investigation of the Son's incarnation, implied by the word "Christology." The Word Christology tradition also includes teachings concerning the generation of the Son/Word from the Father, the personal distinction of the Son/Word from the Father, and the nature of the divinity which the Son/Word possesses. Novatian is another witness to this tradition, and my dissertation will focus on these latter topics as I discuss Novatian's theology of the Son in light of his theology of the Father. According to Novatian, the Word of God is not the Father, but the one who takes on human nature. By emphasizing the personal existence of the Son as the Word and as God, Novatian joined Tertullian and Hippolytus in their assaults on several of the competing and contemporary Christologies.

One theological target of Novatian's work is monarchianism. It is a theology based on the idea that the historical Jesus contained or manifested the Father or the Spirit of the Father. Novatian writes that proponents of Sabellian theology "declare (or at least were of the opinion) that [the Son] was not the Son, but God the Father Himself."¹⁹ E. Evans notes that this group identified themselves as "Monarchians" and that Tertullian mentions this name in *Prax.* 1.²⁰ Eastern authors typically labeled these theologians Sabellians, after one of its prominent exponents. In the West the term *patripassian* (in

47. I agree with this assessment, but compare J. Quasten's assessment in *Patrology II: The Ante-Nicene Literature After Irenaeus* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1986), 217.

¹⁹ *Trin.* 23.2.

²⁰ Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise*, 10. Tertullian uses the term *monarchiani* in *Prax.* 10. Evans adds, "These are in modern times described as *modalists* (a term devised by Dr. Harnack), since their theory was that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three modes or aspects of one divine existence," *Idem*.

reference to the suffering of the Father) became common.²¹ Because Novatian identifies Sabellius by name, I will use the classification Sabellianism.²²

A second theology which Novatian refutes identified Jesus as a mere man. Although scholars usually identify this second target in *Trin.* with proponents of Theodotus' theology, often labeled "adoptionism," this categorization lacks textual support.²³ Novatian does not in fact frame the second group as Hippolytus did in *Ref.* 7.23 where he writes of Theodotus' teaching:

...Jesus was a (mere) man, born of a virgin, according to the counsel of the Father, and that after he had lived promiscuously with all men, and had become pre-eminent religious, he subsequently at his baptism in Jordan received Christ, who came from above and descended (upon him) in form of a dove.

According to Hippolytus, Theodotus explains that divine powers operated in Jesus only after the baptism. For this reason, Jesus was considered to be only a man prior to his baptism. Novatian, however, refers only to opponents who believe that Jesus was only man;²⁴ he might just as well be writing against the Ebionites to whom Hippolytus and others also refer.²⁵ I will refer to this group as humanitarian monarchianists.²⁶

²¹ Idem.

²² *Trin.* 12.9.

²³ See DeSimone's edition of *Trin.*, *On the Trinity*. FC 67. Trans. and Intro. Russell J. DeSimone. Ed. T. P. Halton (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1974), 15; James Leonard Papandrea, "Between Two Thieves: Novatian of Rome and Kenosis Christology," in *If These Stones Could Speak...Studies on Patristic Texts and Archeology: Essays in Honor of Dennis E. Groh* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2009), 51. T. E. Pollard accurately labels this group with the straightforward description: "a humanitarian form of monarchianism which preserved the 'monarchy' of God by denying the divinity of the Son," in *Johannine Christology and the Early Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 71. However, Pollard also seems to accept (confusingly) the general association of this group with Adoptionism when he quotes Evan's description of these monarchians, *Ibid*, 51.

²⁴ See, for example, *Trin.* 11.1-2; 13.7-8; 14.2-17; 15.1; 15.3-10; 16.1-6; 17.6.

²⁵ In *Ref.* 7.22 Hippolytus describes Ebionite theology: "They live conformably to the customs of the Jews, alleging that they are justified according to the law, and saying that Jesus was justified by fulfilling the law...And the (Ebionaeans allege) that they themselves also, when in like manner they fulfill (the law), are able to become Christs; for they assert that our Lord Himself was a man in a like sense with all (the rest of the human family)." See also Irenaeus' *Haer.* 1.26 and Tertullian's *Prescription Against Heretics* 33.

²⁶ I follow Pollard's description, yet do so without his supposition that this group had anything to do with the theology labeled "adoptionism."

Novatian's theological attacks against these groups are well documented in the literature on Novatian. Against the Sabellians, Novatian draws heavily from the Word Christology traditions to show that the Father and Son are distinct. Against the humanitarian monarchians, Novatian presses them to accept the Scriptural references to Jesus as God, Word, and Son. He also argues that the references to the Word existing before the world, creating the world, being subject only to the Father, fulfilling the divine prophecies of Scripture, and manifesting divine power while doing so, should be sufficient to convince the humanistic monarchians that Jesus, the Son and Word, is God.

A Response to Novatian Scholarship

All Novatian scholars acknowledge that *Trin.* teaches the Son's subordination to the Father. One group of scholars understands the inequalities Novatian identifies between the Father and Son as indicating the Son's ontological subordination to the Father.²⁷ A second group, however, argues that Novatian assumes only a subordination in terms of the Son's lesser authority or rank, and members of this group make the case that Novatian teaches the equality of the Father and Son's divinity.²⁸ A third group of scholars believes that Novatian never resolves the theological tension between his

²⁷ Scholars in this group include J. Tixeront, *History of Dogmas: The Antenicene Theology*. Vol. 1. Trans. and Ed. by H. L. B. (St. Louis: Herder, 1910); Émile Amann, "Novatien et novatianisme," DTC 11 (1931): 816-849; Fernand Prat, *The Theology of St. Paul*. Vol. 1. Translated from the 11th Edition by J. L. Stoddard (Westminster, Md.: Newman Bookshop, 1926); E. Peterson, "Novaziano e Novazianismo," EC 8 (1952): 1976-1980; Manlio Simonetti, "Alcune osservazioni sul *De Trinitate* di Novaziano," *Studi in onore di Angelo Monteverdi*, Vol. 2., (Modena: Società Tipografica Editrice Modenese, 1959): 771-783; Pollard, *Johannine Christology*; Vincenzo Loi, *La Trinità* (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1975).

²⁸ Two scholars in particular are currently making this case. See Paul Mattei's, "De Trinitate 31. Texte et Traduction. Commentaire philologique et doctrinal." *Memorie della Accademia delle scienze di Torino* 20 (1996): 159-257; Papandrea, *Trinitarian Theology*, and "Between Two Thieves." Papandrea formulates his assessment based on the *kenosis* of the Son in regard to Novatian's interpretation of Philippians 2.

suggestions of equality and inequality.²⁹ I disagree with both the second and the third group, and I will demonstrate that Novatian advocates the Son's ontological subordination to the Father. Furthermore, my analysis shows that Novatian understands the Son's personal subordination in rank or authority to the Father as a supplement and complement to his central teaching of the Son's ontological subordination.

Studies in the first group, those contending that Novatian clearly taught the ontological subordination of the Son, offer two primary approaches to demonstrating this position: 1) they point to statements Novatian makes about the distinction between the Son's attributes as compared with the Father's; and 2) they emphasize the various ways Novatian uses to insist that the Son is somehow "less than" (*minor*) the Father. My contribution to this group will be to clarify Novatian's theological and philosophical influences, thus bringing to light his intellectual presuppositions and commitments. This analysis is critical to effectively challenging the work of those scholars in the second and third groups.

Two of the most recent works on Novatian comprise the second group of interpretations I mention above. This group takes the position opposite to my own.

Arguments from this second group are based, in part, on the suggestion that Novatian

²⁹ D'Alès, *Novatien*; Gulielmus Kielbach, "Divinitas Filii eiusque Patri subordination in Novatiani libro *De Trinitate*" *Bogoslovska Smotra* 21 (1933): 193-244; Desimone, *Treatise of Novatian*. D'Alès, Kielbach, and DeSimone conclude that *De Trinitate* contains statements consistent with the Son's ontological subordination to the Father, which are coupled with assertions seeming to suggest that the Son possesses a divinity equal to the Father's. I also include W. Yorke Fausset in this, *Novatiani Romanae urbis presbyteri "De Trinitate" liber*. Cambridge Patristic Texts. Edited by W. Yorke Fausset (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909). Although Fausset argues that "there is nothing in the conception of the Son's subordination to conflict with the orthodoxy of a later time," he also does not believe that Novatian provides a doctrine which can ultimately articulate the Son's equality with the Father, *Ibid.* xlvii. Fausset's reading is that Novatian's "position would have been greatly strengthened had he grasped the thought of 'substantia' in its later metaphysical sense," *Idem*. I do not group Fausset with Papandrea and Mattei because he does not make the argument that Novatian clearly understood the importance of articulating the equal divinity of the Father and the Son on a metaphysical level. The effort to establish the Son's equality with the Father is central to the work of Papandrea and Mattei in a way different from Fausset's judgment that the Son's subordination does not necessarily violate divine equality.

associates the limitations of the Son's divine attributes to the Son's dealings with creation and incarnational presence. According to this reading, the distinction in attributes between the Son and the Father are neither permanent nor detrimental to the assumption of the Son's ontological equality with the Father. These scholars connect Novatian's understanding of the Son's diminishment and subordination to the economy, rather than to the inner life of God.³⁰ My analysis challenges what I take to be the insufficient attention paid by these scholars to Novatian's juxtaposition between his theology of the Father, especially in *Trin.* 1-8, and his theology of the Son. To correct this oversight, this dissertation argues that Novatian depends on various iterations of Middle Platonic theological philosophy, which influence his understanding of the Father and therefore the Son.³¹

The third group of studies, however, presents Novatian's theology as an ambivalent mixture of statements which declare both the Son's ontological subordination and the Son's equality with the Father.³² These scholars identify discrepancies in Novatian's teaching to suggest that his theology is limited by the vocabulary and

³⁰ Neither Papandrea nor Mattei explain their positions in such an ultimately simplistic formula. Papandrea, however, coins the phrase "dynamic subordinationism" in an attempt to explain the presence of subordination language. He explains his phrase by suggesting that Novatian teaches a form of kenotic Christology. See his, "Between Two Thieves," 70. Mattei speaks of the equality of substance and the personal inequality of the persons expressed in the Son's obedience as it is manifested especially in the Incarnation. See the first part of Mattei's conclusion, "*De Trinitate* 31," 243-244. See also G. L. Prestige for a discussion of the development of the patristic use of the terms related to economic Trinitarianism, in *God in Patristic Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1959), 97-111.

³¹ I use the phrase "theological philosophy" in reference to non-Christian sources which influenced Novatian. All of the Christian authors whom I treat as sources for Novatian interact with contemporary philosophy to one degree or another.

³² There are a variety of positions to be found in this group regarding the Son's eternity and eternal distinction from the Father. Some of the authors simply assert subordination or inequality while maintaining that the Son exists eternally. For others, the Son's eternal existence is denied. There is no uniform connection made between the ideas of the Son's eternity and the Son's subordination which is expressed through terms of inequality. See, for example, J. F. Bethune-Baker, "Though he regards the existence (*or* generation) of the Son as eternal in the past, he speaks of the future consummation as though the distinction of persons (Father and Son) would cease. The idea of *communio substantiae*... is combined with that of subordination," in *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, 3rd Edition (London: Methuen & Co. LTD., 1923).

theological formulations of his time.³³ Such a framework of interpretation allows Novatian to be presented as attempting to break free from the idea of divine ontological subordination, yet failing to do so completely. I will respond to this group by showing that the portions of *Trin.* which are taken to be suggestive of ontological equality are, in fact, best understood as maintaining the Son's ontological subordination.

By categorizing scholars into three groups, I do not mean to suggest that each group presents homogeneous interpretations of all the topics used to evaluate Novatian's teaching about the Son. In this dissertation, for example, I will argue that Novatian utilizes the idea of the Father sharing His substance with the Son as a basis for calling the Son "God." I identify this teaching with the phrase "ontological connection" or "ontological relationship." With these phrases I mean that the Son's nature and substance come directly from the substance of the Father. However, I reject the understanding of those scholars who assume that an ontological connection between the Father and Son implies their ontological equality.³⁴ Scholars from each of the groups have argued for and against the judgment that Novatian believes the Father shares His substance with the Son.³⁵

³³ For example, DeSimone writes of pre-Nicene authors, "...one must carefully distinguish in these authors the substance of their doctrine from their imperfect mode of expression and the more or less unfortunate consequences which were neither foreseen nor intended. Their inaccuracy was in their philosophy, not in their faith," *Treatise of Novatian*, 135.

³⁴ Papandrea argues that the Son's equality with the Father comes, in part, from his assertion that equality in nature logically follows from the fact the Son's substance comes from the Father's, *Trinitarian Theology*, 331-336. He also states, "Certainly the fact that the Novatianists of 325 accepted Nicaea's definition of ὁμοούσιος implies that they saw it as compatible with the christology of their founder," *Ibid.* 335. I am skeptical of the value of Papandrea's assertion. See also Mattei, "*De Trinitate* 31," 195, for his argument that Novatian insinuates the Son's equality of substance as it determines Mattei's understanding of the Son's possession of the divine nature.

³⁵ DeSimone's work shows an ambivalence about this topic in *Trin.* On a possible interpretations which he accepts of *Trin.* 27, DeSimone writes, "...Novatian never tires of repeating (as we have seen) that the Son is of the Father, is born of Him, and proceeds from Him. When he states here that the Son is hierarchically inferior to the Father, he is referring to that *ministerial subordination* arising from the functions attributed to the Son *ad extra*," in *Treatise of Novatian*, 137. At the same time, DeSimone warns

In a response to the newest developments in scholarship on Novatian, this dissertation presents the ontological subordination of the Son as central to Novatian's theology. I will begin by analyzing Novatian's theology of the Father, which is governed by a strong negative theology and which shares critical assumptions with the theological philosophy of his day. Novatian's positive theology draws on his argument that the Father possesses a range of unique attributes associated with His transcendence. The Father's generation of the Son from His own substance affirms a unique ontological relationship. However, this unique relationship does not diminish the status of the Father's uniquely supreme divine nature. Novatian uses the relationship between the Father and Son to reject the possibility that the Son could possess the quality of the Father's attributes.³⁶

Novatian and Theological Philosophy

In his article on *Trin.*, Dunn calls for a revised reading of Novatian's text. He turns away from an interpretation of the text which emphasizes Novatian's speculation

that Novatian's mode of expression does not explicitly assert a substantial unity between the Father and Son, Ibid. 135. Cf. Bethune-Baker who identified Novatian as accepting the shared substance of the Father and Son in conjunction with ontological subordination. Bethune-Baker writes, "The idea of *communion substantiae*...is combined with that of subordination," in *An Introduction to the Early History*, 107. For support of the interpretation that Novatian teaches the substantial unity between the Father and Son see also Pelland, "Une Passage difficile de Novatien sur I Cor 15:27-28," *Greg* 66:1 (1985), 29; Harnack, *History of Dogma* Vol. 1 and 2. Trans. by Neil Buchanan (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), 314; Fausset, *Novatini Romanae*, xlvii; D'Alès, *Novatien*, 117; DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 175; Papandrea, *Trinitarian Theology*, 334; and Mattei, "De Trinitate 31," 217. For comments by scholars which reject reading Novatian as supporting substantial unity in favor of a reading which advocates a moral unity, see Simonetti, "Alcune osservazione," 772-775; Keilbach, "Divinitas Filii," 223-223; T. E. Pollard, "The Exegesis of John 10:30 in the Early Trinitarian Controversies," *NTS* 3 (1956-1957), 337.

³⁶ I discuss below the different interpretations in the scholarship on Novatian of whether a shared substance equates to an equality of nature. Throughout this dissertation, I will treat shared substance as integral to the teaching of a unique ontological relationship. However, I will argue against the assumption that an equal nature or equality of attributes follows from the Son's sharing in the Father's substance. I do not believe that Novatian treats substance (*substantia*) as a synonym for nature (*natura*) or his comments about divine attributes.

about immanent Trinitarian theology. As noted above, he views Novatian's work as a sustained Scriptural investigation of the Rule of Truth.³⁷ Dunn's perspective on *Trin.* is partially a new direction in the scholarly works on Novatian,³⁸ but his attempt to balance the theological positions of the text as a whole is not.³⁹ By beginning from the proposition that Novatian shies away from advanced theological investigation or speculation, Dunn's work suffers from the unproven, and as far as I can tell unjustified, assertion that Novatian was unconcerned or unfamiliar with many important philosophical and theological topics of his day.⁴⁰

The philosophical environment in which Novatian wrote *Trin.*, as well as the degree to which that environment shaped his work, has often been neglected or

³⁷ From this point, Dunn concludes that this structure somehow detracts from the theological attention Novatian might have given to more advanced topics, stating, "As such it could well be a work designed more for catechetical instruction than for theological investigation. The symbol was explained in terms of the Scripture that lay behind it. It would seem that an exploration of the doctrine of the Trinity was less Novatian's concern (I am not saying thought this it was of no concern) than was helping his readers to understand their faith in the activity of God throughout salvation history. If this be the case then the evidence in the treatise of Novatian's shortcomings with regard to Trinitarian theology may not be shortcomings at all but may be evidence that the Trinity *per se* was not at the centre of his pamphlet," "Diversity and Unity," 390. My primary disagreement with Dunn is in his assumption that Novatian needs to be saved from those scholars who wish to identify him as either heretical/regressive in his Trinitarian theology or as an "orthodox" theologian ahead of his time. Dunn is correct to point out that scholarship ought not to start with the goal of rescuing or accusing Novatian as a theologian. However, he cannot reach the most accurate conclusions by arguing from the assumption of Novatian's limited interest in theological sophistication or speculation, even if he concedes that theological speculation played some part in *Trin.*

³⁸ I note this with the qualification that all contemporary scholars and many previous scholars acknowledge some catechetical aspect to the text along with the idea that the title itself is an addition to the text rather than Novatian's original title.

³⁹ Many scholars treat the text as presenting a consistent theology and have come to conflicting interpretations of Novatian's theology. Keilbach, for example, observes that *Trin.* 31 functions as an elegant summarization (*eleganter resumi*) of the preceding 30 chapters, in "Divinitas Filii," 213.

⁴⁰ Dunn states, for example, "Arguing from reason, Novatian stated that there was no room for a god superior to the creator, but did not say whether or not there was room for an inferior god, for that simply was not at issue," "Diversity and Unity," 392. Dunn's assertion cannot stand the reasonable presumption of Novatian's familiarity with theological ideas found in Tertullian's texts, especially *Herm.* and *Prax.*, where Tertullian took up this very issue. Such issues were very much a part of Novatian's intellectual environment. We can compare Dunn's statements, for example, to DeSimone's and his willingness to follow Cyprian in identifying Novatian as a Stoic philosopher prior to his conversion, *On the Trinity*, 2. Dunn must also presume that Novatian remained immune and isolated from the Middle Platonic teachings and texts I identify in later chapters, as well as the various Gnostic systems which demanded the theological replies of predecessors like Irenaeus and Hippolytus. Dunn's conclusion apparently rests on the fact that Novatian does not say "inferior" god.

considerably downplayed by scholars.⁴¹ The arguments for and against Novatian's acceptance of subordinationism have led to the judgment by some that Novatian's theology either derived from or rejected Middle/Neo Platonism.⁴² The assumed central point of contact between Novatian and Platonism is the idea of a divine hierarchy: Platonism's hierarchy of divine beings is compared with the idea of the Son's ontological subordination in some Christian authors.⁴³ Adolf Harnack, for example, rejected the suggestion that Novatian taught the Son's ontological subordination to the Father, and therefore concluded that "no trace of Platonism is to be found in [Novatian's] dogmatic."⁴⁴ Harnack's underlying presumption is problematic. He views ontological subordination as a Hellenistic concept, and he bases his evaluation of Novatian's theology on his reading of Novatian's strong fidelity to Christian thought.⁴⁵ I do not

⁴¹ Notable exceptions are Vogt, Spanneut, and Daniélou. See Hermann Josef Vogt, *Coetus Sanctorum: Der Kirchenbegriff des Novatian und die Geschichte seiner Sonderkirche* (Bonn: Verlag, 1968), in which he compares Novatian's ethical and moral understanding to the principles of Stoicism. As mentioned already, Daniélou addresses the influence of Stoicism on Novatian as it is found in Cicero, Seneca, and Apuleius, in *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 233-250. See the references to Novatian in Michel Spanneut's, *Le stoïcisme des pères de l'Église: De Clément de Rome à Clément D'Alexandrie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957).

⁴² D'Alès suggested a mix of philosophical influences. He speaks about Novatian, along with Justin and Tertullian, as being influenced by a form of Alexandrian philosophy. He connects this philosophy to teachings about divine intermediaries (similar to those of Middle Platonism) and then to the pre-Nicene affinity with the teaching of the Son's ontological subordination. However, he also assumes that the influence of Stoic philosophy on Novatian acted as a counterweight to any expression in *Trin.* which supported a Christianized formulation of subordinationism. See D'Alès, *Novatien*, 112-113. Although I think D'Alès is right to seek philosophical influences on *Trin.*, his analysis lacks the development of evidence which would be necessary to convince and challenge later scholars less inclined to see the importance of philosophical influences on *Trin.*

⁴³ Contact with Aristotelianism plays a far less central role in scholarship, although there is one important issue which does concern the focus of this dissertation. In treating the Son as eternal, some scholars identify Aristotle's *Categories of Interpretation* as providing a framework by which Novatian speaks in temporal language about the Son's existence, while really rejecting a literal understanding of these terms. See below in chapter 7's section "Novatian's use of *semper* and *tempus*." Stoicism also has an influence on Novatian's work. The topics most directly related to the influence of Stoicism, however, have to do with aspects of cosmology and the Incarnation which are not, in most cases, directly applicable to this project.

⁴⁴ Harnack, *History of Dogma* (2), 314, and see n. 2 on the same page.

⁴⁵ We can also compare Harnack's treatment of the development of Logos theology as representing a shift away from the ancient faith of the Church to a Hellenized theological system. He writes, "The establishment of the Logos-Christology within the *faith* of the Church—and indeed as

share his bifurcation of Greek and Christian thought. Instead, I will suggest that parallels and influences exist between Novatian and philosophical sources, especially Middle Platonism. Ultimately these influences reinforced Novatian's understanding of the Gospel and the Christian tradition, but they did not control it in the way that has been suggested.

The work of R. J. DeSimone has been particularly valuable to my project. It provides numerous insights into Novatian's work, but it does so in light of certain assumptions and methodologies different from my own. For example, DeSimone's monograph from 1970 frequently suggests that Novatian's theology appears to include the ontological subordination of the Son. In his evaluation of Novatian's treatment of Phil. 2:6-11, DeSimone takes a moment to suggest the influence of Platonism on Novatian, "Compare, also, this doctrine of Novatian with the tenets of neo-platonist philosophy: A diminished God is still truly God; the inferior beings who come forth directly from God are still divine although subordinate."⁴⁶ This is one of the very few times DeSimone compares Novatian with theological philosophy.⁴⁷ Over twenty years later, DeSimone corrects his comment from 1970 in an article which analyzes Novatian's treatment of the Philippians hymn as upholding the Son's ontological equality with the Father.⁴⁸ In his later work, DeSimone offers the simple statement, "Novatian's doctrine

articulus fundamentalis—was accomplished after severe conflicts during the course of a hundred years (till about 300). It signified the transformation of the faith into a system of beliefs with an Hellenic-philosophical cast," in *Outlines of the History of Dogma*. Trans. by Edwin Knox Mitchell (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 167.

⁴⁶ DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 113.

⁴⁷ Although DeSimone makes this point, his analysis does not attempt to account for why there would be influences or parallels with Platonism.

⁴⁸ DeSimone claims to change his position only on the interpretation of Novatian's exegesis of Phil. 2:6-11. However, throughout DeSimone's earlier work, he presents Novatian as inconsistent in his logic and presentation. For DeSimone, individual passages either denied ontological subordination or upheld it. See DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 137 for the former and 169 for the latter. Therefore,

has nothing in common with the tenets of Neoplatonic philosophy.”⁴⁹ He then repeats his description of neo-platonism from his earlier work.

I am not proposing that Novatian is a Middle Platonist, clothing his thinking in Christian garb. Rather, I argue that Novatian’s theological consistency appears as a traditional Word Christology based on an overarching theology of the Father. His theology of the Father is influenced not only by Scripture and his Christian sources, but also by his knowledge of theological philosophy. I will show that he utilized the terms and traditions of theological philosophy extensively, and I will show that he did so when he believed it comported with his understanding of Christian belief.⁵⁰

Furthermore, my position is not that of DeSimone, who followed Keilbach in viewing Novatian’s theology as deficient in regard to his underlying philosophy.⁵¹

DeSimone offers the following conclusion,

[Novatian] proclaims the equality of Father and Son; because he did not have an adequate notion of metaphysical unity, he denies the Son certain inalienable attributes. His error is basically philosophical: He transfers the properties of a

although DeSimone rejects the connection to Platonism in analyzing this passage, he completely leaves to the side the possibility that Platonism may have influenced any of the other passages in *Trin.* which he believed (in 1970) to suggest the Son’s ontological subordination.

⁴⁹ DeSimone, “Again the Kenosis of Phil. 2: 6-11: Novatian *Trin.* 22,” *Aug.* 32 (1992): 96.

⁵⁰ There is a discussion among Novatian scholars as to the state of the technical linguistic development of theological Latin during the period when Novatian wrote *Trin.* Papandrea, for example, agrees with Loi, who suggests that Latin technical terms had not developed very far. See Papandrea, *Trinitarian Theology*, 59-64 for his discussion of this topic; Vincenzo Loi, “La Latinità Cristiana nel De Trinitate di Novaziano,” *Rivista di Cultura Classica e Medioevale* 13 (1971), 137. Cf. Christine Mohrmann, “Les origines de la latinité chrétienne à Rome,” *VC* 3 (1949), 163-164, for the opposing view. These studies attempt to look at the development of widely accepted terms. My project, however, attempts to show that Novatian borrows some technical language from Christian and non-Christian sources as well as systematizing his own use of terms. Therefore, the question of whether Novatian pioneers later vocabulary for orthodox use is an issue not directly related to this study.

⁵¹ See Keilbach, “Divinitas Filii,” 222-224 and DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 181. Cf. Dunn who seems to think that deep philosophical questions played almost no influence on the theology found in *Trin.* “Diversity and Unity,” 392. Douglas F. Kelly argues that Stoicism played a critical role in Novatian’s Trinitarian theology as well as his basic understanding of the nature of God in “The Beneficial Influence of Stoic Logic and Epistemology on Early Christian Theology: With Particular Reference to Novatian of Rome,” in *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 13, 2 (1981): 817-825. See also C. B. Daly, who connects Novatian’s moral rigorism to the influence of Stoicism directly and also to Tertullian’s stoically inclined theology in “Novatian and Tertullian: A Chapter in the History of Puritanism,” *ITQ* 19 (1952): 33-43.

physical entity to the metaphysical domain where the laws of a physical entity lose their specific value. [*Treatise of Novatian*, 181]

DeSimone seems to assume that Novatian's knowledge of theological philosophy helped to foster an incomplete philosophy of his own. If one is judging Novatian entirely on standards of later orthodoxy, DeSimone's statement makes sense.⁵² However, if we are to understand the framework of Novatian's theology, then we must see the coherence of the system which he presents.

Scholars like DeSimone, Keilbach, and D'Ales, who see Novatian's theology as marooned between the teachings of the Son's ontological subordination and teachings of the Son's equality with the Father, address Novatian's view of divine substance. They presume that Novatian's claim of a shared substance between the Father and the Son implies ontological equality. In light of this interpretation, Novatian's insistence on the diminished attributes of the Son stand as a confusing rejoinder to divine equality, which these scholars take to be expressed in the Son's sharing in the divine substance.⁵³ In response to this suggestion, I will argue that Novatian does not make the Father's sharing of the divine substance with the Son equivalent to the Father's sharing the divine attributes, which make Him unique and supreme. Novatian's theology proposes that the Father shares his substance with the Son (i.e., the ontological connection) even though the Son receives a diminished divine nature (i.e., the Son is ontologically subordinate to the Father).

⁵² In fact, this is an overriding criterion of DeSimone's work. See Dunn's rebuke of this as a methodology in "Diversity and Unity," 387-390.

⁵³ Keilbach, for example, speaks about an essential equality based on the Son's shared substance, but sees Novatian calling that into question by distinguishing the Father's attributes from those of the Son, "Divinitas Filii," 208. Similarly, D'Alès writes, "Que la diversité meme des attributions extérieures obscurcisse en quelque mesure la communauté d'essence, cela est très sûr. On ne cherchera pas chez Novatien la formule claire et précise du dogme nicéen," *Novatien*, 117.

Dissertation Outline

In chapter 1, I will outline several philosophical examples of negative theology in sources known to Novatian or important to understanding his intellectual environment. In particular, I will analyze the interplay between the expressions of divine attributes and the affirmation of the Supreme God's transcendence in three Platonic authors. This investigation will also shed light on the state of theological epistemology which would have been familiar to Novatian. Although chapter 1 details the philosophic use of negative theology to speak of divine transcendence, I will point out that the articulation of negative theology did not, in fact, eliminate the simultaneous and coherent presence of positive theological statements about the Supreme God.

Chapter 2 will analyze Novatian's theology of the Father as transcendent in light of the philosophical intellectual environment presented in chapter 1. I will also show that Novatian utilizes the language of negative theology discussed in chapter 1 in order to illustrate the incomprehensibility of the Supreme God. Furthermore, I will describe how Novatian's emphasis on the incomprehensibility of God as well as his insistence on the inability to know the name or substance of the Supreme God is an important synthesis by Novatian of the principles seen among the Middle Platonic tradition as well as in the Christian tradition.

In chapter 3, I will discuss Novatian's theological epistemology. I will demonstrate that Novatian sees natural and divine revelation as the bridge between his use of negative theology for his presentation of the Supreme God and the positive theology he offers of Father. The latter theology I will present in chapter 4. I use the term "positive" to describe Novatian's application of terms which portray the nature and

activity of the Supreme God. By relying on revelation, Novatian distances himself from the suggestions of a natural connection between the mind and the divine nature in the Middle Platonist examples outlined in chapter 1.

Chapter 4 will investigate Novatian's descriptions of the Father's nature and activity and then compare his theology with the language concerning the Supreme Father in Christian and philosophic sources. Novatian offers a range of specific terms and ideas which can apply only to the Supreme Father, such as *aeternus*, *infinitus*, and *immensus*.⁵⁴ Novatian also establishes the uniqueness of the Supreme God by labeling Him as *unus* and *pater*. Above all, I will demonstrate that Novatian designates the Father's divine nature as necessarily unique.

Chapter 5 will outline the Word theology and Word Christology traditions. In this chapter I will show how the development of the Stoic language associated with the Word became incorporated in Middle Platonic usage. Before discussing the Word Christologies of Novatian's theological predecessors, I will describe how the Word theology of the Middle Platonic tradition influenced Christian theology. By looking briefly at Christian authors who served as precedents to Novatian's Word Christology, I will demonstrate the manner by which individual theologians spoke about the Son/Word's divine immanence in relation to the Father's divine transcendence.

In chapter 6, I will present Novatian's six primary arguments for calling the Son "God." I will show that Novatian does not suggest the Son's divine equality with the Father as necessary for identifying the Son as God. The purpose of this chapter is to present and contextualize critical aspects of Novatian's theology which do not support

⁵⁴ In chapter 4, 6, and 7, I will describe how Novatian reserves a superlative meaning and unique application of these terms for the Father alone.

the suggestion of ontological equality. In fact, some of Novatian's arguments rely on the distinction of the Father and Son's attributes in order to describe the distinction of the divine persons.

In chapter 7, I will address those passages and topics in *Trin.* which contain evidence for the Son's ontological subordination to the Father. I will show that Novatian's theology of the Son depends on distinguishing the Son's attributes from those of the unique Father. I will focus on the Son's generation and birth, contact with time and space, as well as the manner by which the Father shares His substance to demonstrate the importance which the Son's ontological subordination to the Father played in Novatian's theology.

Chapter One: Philosophic Approaches to Negative Theology and Divine Transcendence

Introduction

Novatian makes the Father's transcendence and indescribability a foundation of his theology in *Trin.* In light of the Father's transcendence, the manner by which he speaks of the Father reflects his engagement with philosophical and Christian traditions, especially the negative theology which was common in late antiquity.¹ In this chapter, I will present an outline of various expressions of negative theology found in philosophical sources influential to Novatian and his intellectual environment.² I will rely on the analysis of the current chapter to show in chapter 2 that Novatian rejects all exhaustive knowledge about the Father's nature with arguments similar to or dependent on those found in philosophical texts.³

There is no doubt that while Hellenistic Judaism and Jewish Christianity played a role in affirming the transcendence of God in Christian circles,⁴ the language used by

¹ See D. W. Palmer, "Atheism, Apologetic, and Negative Theology in the Greek Apologists of the Second Century," *VC* 37 (1983): 234-59; Raoul Mortley, *From Word to Silence: Vol. 2 The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1986), 13-44; and Helen Rhee, *Early Christian Literature: Christ and Culture in the Second and Third Centuries* (New York: Routledge, 2005): 50.

² As noted above, Novatian knew some of the works of Cicero and Apuleius, however I am not arguing that Novatian knew Alcinous. I present Alcinous' work as a useful tool for comparing the similarities between his theological philosophy and that of those authors known to Novatian.

³ By "exhaustive knowledge," I mean Novatian's emphasis on the philosophical position that the identification of any divine attribute necessarily entails qualifications about the insufficiency of any terms used in the description. Novatian's concerns about apophatic theological language concerning the Father will be placed in contrast to the language he uses regarding the Son. In terms of descriptions about the Son, I will use the difference in presentation as one argument for clarifying Novatian's understanding of the Son's ontological subordination to the Father.

⁴ Christopher Stead notes that "Jews had already taken steps to present their religion in a philosophical form calculated to appeal to cultured pagans," *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 99. See also A. Hillary Armstrong, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1960), 8-15. Armstrong argues that the major distinction between Christian and Greek thought can be found in the Christian acceptance of God as infinite and the emphasis on negative theology. As I will point out in this chapter, sufficient evidence is available to counter Armstrong's claim. Christians, such as Novatian, accepted a flourishing negative theology which

Christian authors to speak about the Father's transcendence came primarily from philosophic language.⁵ I accept the argument that Christians of the second and third centuries discussed the nature of God the Father's transcendence in light of traditional philosophical arguments and language.⁶ Although I do not deny that some of Novatian's Christian sources also used Jewish and/or Jewish Christian traditions,⁷ Novatian demonstrates little interest with such perspectives.⁸ I argue instead that Novatian relied, to a degree, on Latin and Greek philosophical traditions. His worldview, having grown

involved expression of the divine nature as infinite and eternal. Middle Platonists offered a variety of forms which Novatian was familiar with. See also Palmer, who notes the different sources of negative theology which scholars have variously believed to be most influential on the Apologists, "Atheism, Apologetic, and Negative Theology," 234-236.

⁵ On this topic, Daniélou writes of the Apologists, "At this stage there is, of course, no question of a theology of transcendence in the strict sense; what the Jewish and Christian writers are seeking to establish in opposition at once to idolatry, mythology, astrology, and demonology is primarily the spiritual, unique, and uncreated nature of God," *The Development of Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea*. Vol. 2, *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture*. Translated and edited by John Austin Baker (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), 324. See also Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Jena: Frommann, 1923), 20, in which he attributes to later Platonism's metaphysics the greatest influence on Christianity. Palmer, referring to Puech, Norris, Barnard, Grant and Osborn, notes the "widely held view....that the apologists take over their negative theology from contemporary Middle Platonism," "Atheism, Apologetic, and Negative Theology," 234.

⁶ Apart from the influences of Hellenistic thought apparent in some of the Apologists, such as Justin, the explicit encounter between philosophy and Christianity can be seen, for example, in Theophilus' *Autol.*, Tertullian's *Herm.*, and Origen's *Cels.* These authors specifically challenge philosophical doctrines and individual philosophers. Regardless of whether one accepts the broad influence of Philo on the Apologists for philosophical language as found in Wolfson and others, the point remains that philosophical language and tradition stands behind the language which I address in this chapter.

⁷ See, for example, William R. Schoedel's discussion of Theophilus' contact with Judaism, in "Theophilus of Antioch: Jewish Christian?" *ILC* 18 (1993): 279-97.

⁸ For example, below I address Novatian's interpretation of the Tetragramaton. His exegesis of Exodus 3:14 looks exclusively like arguments related to Platonic expressions of Being. Likewise, Novatian's work does not explicitly engage Gnostic groups the way Irenaeus and Hippolytus do in that his theological presumptions do attempt to argue with Gnostic thinking. For example, Novatian's argument for God's ineffability does not include a rejection of the Gnostic use of *agnostos*. He presumes, like Justin and Theophilus, that knowledge of the creator God is a part of intellectual pagan history rather than anything having to do with the revelations of aeonic activity. Therefore, it is not surprising that Novatian does not use the term *ignotum* (the Latin equivalent of the Gnostic term *agnostos* which can be found in *Haer.* 1.23.2). See Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 335-40 for a discussion of Gnostic terminology and theology related to God's transcendence. However, Edmondo Lupieri has argued that Novatian's interpretation of Ez. 1:22 owes something to a Jewish or Jewish Christian tradition of the text, "Contributo per un'analisi della citazioni veterotestamentarie ne *De Trinitate* di Novaziano," *Aug.* 22 (1982): 211-227.

up presumably as a non-Christian Roman,⁹ depends upon a classical education which would have exposed him at least to the handbooks of philosophy.¹⁰

Negative Theology and Transcendence in Philosophical Works

R. Mortley identifies in late Hellenism “a new transcendentalism in religious thinking” associated with negative theology.¹¹ Negative theology, however, is not the same as what is commonly referred to as the *via negativa*. Though he acknowledges the relationship between the two, Mortley helpfully clarifies a difference which scholars have not always made. On the one hand, the *via negativa*, “eliminates all personal and human imagery from the description of the ontological essence, but not only this, it goes further in order to eliminate every familiar characteristic, so that not only the image of the personal is annulled, but also the entire language of the external world.”¹² Negative theology highlights divine transcendence. However, certain attributes and characteristics of divinity are also discussed under the assumption that such descriptions never completely comprehend or grasp the divine nature. I will show in chapters 2-4 that Novatian’s writing is an example of negative theology rather than *via negativa*.

⁹ Ronald Heine, “Cyprian and Novatian,” in *The Cambridge History of Early Christianity*, Eds. Young, Francis, Lewis Ayres, Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 157.

¹⁰ Additionally, Stefan Freund also has argued that Novatian had an extensive knowledge of Virgil, a primary subject of study in Roman education, *Vergil im frühen Christentum. Untersuchungen zu den Vergilzitaten bei Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Novatian, Cyprian und Arnobius* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000).

¹¹ Mortley, *From Word to Silence* (2), 14. Eric F. Osborn also talks about Middle Platonism’s new religious emphasis as well as the “heightened transcendence of God,” in *The Beginning of Christian Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 28.

¹² Mortley, *From Word to Silence* (2), 15.

Novatian favors a negative theology which does not eliminate all positive knowledge about God.¹³ Like Christian authors, Middle Platonists, Aristotelians, Epicureans and Stoics used a range of terminology related to God's nature.¹⁴ However, Middle Platonists in particular advanced the use of negative theology in the intellectual development of idealist philosophy, although they too accepted certain positive attributes as descriptive of the divine nature. Kenney puts it this way,

But there was no escaping *kataphasis*. This was true in several ways. As Michael Williams noted in reference to 'gnostic' texts, apophatic theology was usually connected up with kataphatic claims. This—we might now see—is a conceptual necessity, for they are interrelated. *Apophasis* without *kataphasis* would be empty. Moreover, even the most intensely apophatic theology is guided by a tacit conception of its divine or ultimate principle. Otherwise, its process of negation would be nothing but an exercise in skepticism.¹⁵

This passage from Kenney summarizes some of the most recent advances in scholarship regarding the interaction between apophatic and kataphatic theology in the first few centuries A.D. Kenney represents a developing interpretive framework which affects scholarship related to hellenistic philosophy, patristics, and especially various "Gnostic" groups.¹⁶ I agree with the major conclusion of this trend in scholarship: negative

¹³ John P. Kenney speaks of the "critical value" of negative theology. He writes concerning it, "This reading of the ancient Platonic texts suggests that the ascension of the spiritual intellect—which apophatic theology seems meant to initiate among Platonists—could not have begun without a fairly well-grounded conception of the divine world. Otherwise, there would have been nothing to negate, nothing for the contemplative soul to exceed and surpass. An established theology would seem, then, to have been a precondition of Platonic *apophasis*," in "Ancient Apophatic Theology," in *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures, and Texts*. Eds. Turner, John D. and Ruth Majercik (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000). 259-273, here 264-5. See also Kenney, "The Critical Value of Negative Theology," *HTR* 86 (1993): 439-453.

¹⁴ I use "God" acknowledging, with Eric Osborn, that "among philosophers, the one first-principle was not commonly called 'God,'" *Emergence of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 39.

¹⁵ Kenney, "Ancient Apophatic Theology," 265.

¹⁶ Kenney cites A. H. Armstrong as supporting his thesis. Armstrong writes, "A negative theology needs a positive theology to wrestle with and transcend," in "On Not Knowing Too Much about God," in *Hellenic and Christian Studies* (Aldershot, Hampshire, Great Britain: Variorum; Brookfield, Vt.: Gower, 1990), 131. See the studies found in *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures, and Texts*. Eds. Turner, John D. and Ruth Majercik (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), for examples of this trend.

theology, leading up to and during Novatian's time, depended on the interplay between kataphatic and apophatic language.

In the course of this chapter, I will note the debates in both philosophic and theological scholarship regarding the range of interpretations concerning negative theology. As will be shown below, the idea that negative theology includes positive content about the divine is a key point in the discussions. I believe that Novatian, as well as the authors on whom he relied, made a fundamental distinction between the ability to speak about God's nature (and sometimes substance) and the inability to exhaustively define or understand God's nature. This qualifying remark opens the way for me to discuss how and why authors would embrace negative theology and then proceed to speak about divine qualities.

When speaking about God, it is also important to recognize that both non-Christian and Christian authors identified the divine being with various names including God, the One, and the Highest.¹⁷ Many early Christian authors identified this being as God the Father, and they embraced some of the philosophical attributes associated with the One or the Supreme Being as found in a variety of philosophical sources.¹⁸ Throughout this chapter, I will use the labels God and Father synonymously since Novatian followed this tradition and seems to have read the philosophical sources in this light.¹⁹

¹⁷ Mortley, *From Word to Silence* (2), 13.

¹⁸ Rhee, *Early Christian Literature*, 50-55. Daniélou uses a quotation from Clement of Alexandria to make the same point, "They admit, even though against their will, that God is One, that he is unbegotten...and indestructible..." (*Protrept.* VI:68, 3; cf. XII: 120, 2), which is a quotation from Plato (*Timaeus* 52 a)," *Gospel Message*, 330. See also Justin, who believed that Plato had read the Pentateuch and borrowed ideas related to the Father, Son, and Spirit. He takes Plato's references to the demiurge as references to God the Father in addition to finding references to the Son and Spirit in *I Apol.* 59-60.

¹⁹ Novatian, like Justin and Tertullian before him, at times reserves the term "God" for the Father and often "Lord" for the Son or Jesus. I agree with Dunn's comment, regarding the first eight chapters of

The Relationship Between God and Man

When the philosophical schools spoke about God, they began by positing several theories about man's connection to the divine. Academic, Stoic, and Aristotelian philosophers referred to the soul or the mind as the point of contact between man and God.²⁰ Some of the authors I will mention use "soul" and "mind" synonymously.²¹ In all cases, the soul and the mind were seen to be related to man's highest function or highest aspect of nature.²² For my discussion, the most important aspect concerning the nature of the soul/mind concerns the question of whether the soul shared the divine nature. The manner by which a particular philosopher or school addressed this question determined certain epistemological boundaries related to speaking about the divine nature.

Trin.: "It would seem that in most of this section when Novatian referred to God he meant Father, even though only in some instances did he refer explicitly to the Father," "Diversity and Unity," 393. See *Prax.* 7 and 13 for Tertullian's rationale for this practice.

²⁰ F. E. Peters provides extensive citations and explanations of the connections between *nous* and *psyche* in the respective entries in his *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* (New York: New York University Press, 1967). There is a difficulty in my readiness to equate the use of technical school terminology, specifically the Academic and the Stoic, with the English words "mind" and "soul." Plato relied on the concept of *nous* to describe both a cosmic principle and the *nous* in the *psyche*, while Stoics spoke of the *psyche*'s *hegemonikon*, which had the capacity to develop towards rationality. I believe Novatian saw the emphasis on language of rationality (including mind, soul, word, etc.) in philosophical parlance as creating something like a universal perspective. As I show below, he found other words, such as "spirit," to be more problematic. Of course, a relationship between the head and the highest part of the soul appears in numerous works, including Plato's *Tim.*

²¹ Apuleius, for example, quotes several authors who use the word *mens*. He then uses *animus* to refer to *mens* when commenting on those quotations. It therefore appears that Apuleius saw the mind and the soul as synonymous and thus interchangeable terms. Others, such as Tertullian, treat the terms as descriptive of a faculty and its function, respectively. In chapter 18 of his *The Soul (De anima)*, hereafter *An.*, he provides an account of his these topics in his anthropological understanding. Man's governing principle is his soul (*anima*). The soul's primary faculty of understanding objects of the intellect is the mind (*animus*).

²² Though Stoics used *hegemonikon* as the technical word for the soul's commanding principle, the immediate relationship such a principle had with Platonic language of *nous* is obvious. Sextus Empiricus writes, "Some [of the Stoics]...say that soul has two meanings, that which sustains the whole compound, and in particular, the commanding-faculty. For when we say that man is a compound of soul and body, or that death is separation of soul and body, we are referring particularly to the commanding-faculty," (*Against the professors* 7.234, quoted in Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 315.

Among the teachings of the philosophical schools important to my study, three approaches characterized the relationship between the mind of man and God. These approaches include 1) the human mind is a part or a piece of the divine mind and is therefore able to grasp divine realities,²³ 2) the human mind possesses attributes similar to those of the divine mind and therefore can make accurate predications about the nature of God,²⁴ and 3) the mind has no connection to the divine mind and therefore true knowledge of the divine mind remains impossible.²⁵

The third approach mentioned above found two distinct forms of expression. The first expression rejected any connection between the mind and the divine nature. The result of this thorough break between the human mind and the divine nature led to the conclusion that man cannot say anything certain about the divine nature. However, a different understanding of the third approach offered a less extreme epistemological gap.

²³ Gretchen Reydam-Schils describes a form of the Stoic position in a similar way in *Demiurge and Providence: Stoic and Platonist Readings in Plato's Timaeus* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 66. See Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* 2.1 where he speaks of a *θείας ἀπομοίρας*.

²⁴ One expression of Middle Platonism held to this view. Daniélou comments, "...in Platonist thought νοῦς, mind, and the divine, θεῖον, were of the same nature, and that as a result νοῦς, when purified, possessed the power to contemplate the divine—a view expressed, for example, by Celcus (Origen, *Cels.* VII, 36)," in *Gospel Message*, 333. See also Apuleius, *De deo Socr.* 12-13 in which he discusses the common nature of mind and reason shared between the gods, daemons, and men. In Cicero's *De legibus* 1.22-23, a principle of unity existed, though he did not take the natures of the human mind and the divine to be the same: "Thus, since there is nothing better than reason, and reason exists in both man and God, the principal link between man and God is reason. But those who share reason must also share right reason and, since right reason is law, we must conclude that men and gods are also linked by law," quoted in Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition*, Vol. 1 (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 86. See also Reydam-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence*, 61. Finally, we can find this doctrine treated in Ps.-Aristotle's *Mund.* 1: "It was not possible by means of the body to reach the heavenly region or to leave the earth and explore that heavenly place...so the soul, by means of philosophy, taking the mind as its guide, has crossed the frontier, and made the journey out of its own land by a path that does not tire the traveler. It has embraced in thought the things that are most widely separated from each other in place; for it had no difficulty, I think, in recognizing things that were related to it, and with 'the soul's divine eye' it grasped things divine, and interpreted them for mankind."

²⁵ One form of this can be found in the New Academy's skepticism prior to the period of the Middle Platonists. The Academy's turn towards skepticism under the leadership of Arcesilaus may have rejected certainty in knowledge. M. Schofield puts it this way, "The main thesis to which Arcesilaus is said to have subscribed is the claim that nothing is known for certain, or more precisely that there is no such thing as what the Stoics called cognition," in "Academic Epistemology," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, Eds. Algra, Keimpe, Jonathan Barnes, Jaap Mansfeld, Malcom Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 327.

This understanding included the idea that true things can be said of the divine, but nothing can be said exhaustively. The upshot of this approach includes epistemological possibilities similar to the second approach, but without relying on the idea of a shared nature of the mind with the divine nature. Though the second form of the third approach accepted the possibility that true and accurate things can be said of God, this position nevertheless rejected a shared nature of the divine mind with the human mind (or soul).²⁶

A primary source for considerations about the various views on contact between man's mind and the divine was Plato.²⁷ Stoics, Middle Platonists, and Aristotelians mined his works for support of their differing positions. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato writes about "the ascent of the soul to the place of true being, accessible not to the senses, but to reason alone, and the source of all true knowledge (247ce)."²⁸ In this passage, the emphasis on reason demonstrates the association between the soul and the divine. A radically different argument, found in *Parmenides* 137c-142a, challenges the possibility of any categorization of the first principle with concepts, such as being, time, or place.²⁹

²⁶ The philosophic and Gnostic use of emanation language, including *prolatus* and *proferre*, has a certain role in these approaches. Novatian does not address them specifically, but see Tertullian's *Prax.* 8 for his argument that despite Valentian use of them, the terms are traditional and appropriate for Christians to use. Fausset points to instances of the terms also in Justin's *Dial.* and Tertullian's *Apology* 21, in *Novatiani Romanae*, 81 n. 4.

²⁷ Related to this topic is the idea of the "unknown God" and the roots of negative theology. Palmer notes the work of Daniélou, Armstrong, Markus, and Hack in identifying both Hellenistic Judaism's contribution as well as the tradition of negative theology in Presocratics, in "Atheism, Apologetic, and Negative Theology," 234-5.

²⁸ Cited by Osborn, *Emergence of Christian Theology*, 42.

²⁹ This is the so-called first hypothesis. See Joseph C. McLelland, *God the Anonymous: A Study in Alexandrian Philosophical Theology*. Patristic Monograph Series 4 (Cambridge, Mass: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd., 1976), 9-11, for a discussion of the two hypotheses in Christian, especially those in the Alexandrian tradition, and in Middle Platonic works. Dillon attributes the influence of the *Parmenides* to Alcinoüs' negative theology, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*. Rev. Ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 155. Salvatore Lilla suggests that the *Parmenides* had a very wide scope of influence: "Particularly important is the doctrine of the absolute unknowability of the first principle, which connects Clement very closely with Philo, with Gnosticism, and with Neoplatonism; it derives from the Neopythagorean interpretation of the 'one' of the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*, although in the case of Philo and of Clement the influence of Scriptural passages cannot be excluded,"

In this view the mind shares no contact with the divine. The passage concludes, “And thus there is no name of it [the first principle], no reasoning concerning it, nor any knowledge of it, no sensation of it, no opinion of it.”³⁰ The Parmenidian passage suggests that the divine nature remains entirely out of the mind’s reach. It represents the third approach, mentioned above, in its most strict interpretation. Like most philosophers, Plato accepted speech about the divine, while limiting the capacity of the mind to think and express attributes of God.³¹ After a few centuries of epistemological skepticism in the New Academy, Middle Platonists attempted to balance affirmations about God’s ineffability (*arrhetos/ineffabilis*)³² on the one hand with positive predications about the Supreme nature on the other.

By the 3rd century A.D., Middle Platonism and Stoicism dominated philosophical inquiry.³³ These schools often cited Plato but interpreted passages according to traditions

Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 231.

³⁰ *Parmenides* 141e-142a. Osborn quotes this passage from the *Parmenides* and briefly suggests the logical relevance to Christian negative theology, *Beginning of Christian Philosophy*, 31. He also points out that second-century Christian authors agreed “with Plato’s *Parmenides* that the One was only capable of negative description,” 32. However, he adds, “But they said other things also,” which points to the difficulty in assessing the influences and boundaries of negative theology on specific Christian authors. Although negative theology is one of the primary subjects of this chapter, it is important to recognize the distinctions between the negative theologies of Alcinous, Apuleius, Justin, and Novatian on the one hand, and the form of negative theology which Hippolytus attributes to Basilides in *Ref.* 7.20.3. Basilides’ is the extreme form of negative theology which rejects any level of predication and which was arguably influenced by this position found in the *Parmenides*. On this topic in general, see Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 339-340 and Harry Austryn Wolfson, “Negative Attributes in the Church Fathers and in Basilides,” *HTR* 50:2 (1957), 151-156.

³¹ See above the quotation from the *Phaedrus*. Cf. T. Taylor in the notes of his translation of *Dogm. Plat.* who holds that the *Parmenides* is Plato’s final word on the highest God, 325.

³² See Alcinous *Did.* 10.3-4 and Apuleius *De deo Socr.* 3.124.

³³ Such a statement in some ways is problematic. Though I accept Dillon’s caution of labeling philosophy during this era as “eclectic,” there is no doubt about the blending of doctrines between the major schools. The blending makes discerning any particular school’s influence on Novatian difficult since influences include, for example, Cicero (who identified himself as a Platonist though clearly showing Stoic leanings), Apuleius (who includes Aristotelian themes in his works—not the least of which is his own translation into Latin of Ps.-Aristotle’s *Mund.*), and Seneca (who, while mainly presenting a philosophy marked by Stoicism, demonstrates sympathies with Middle Platonism).

later than the original writings.³⁴ In the case of the Stoics, their cosmology depended on assertions concerning the *pneuma*'s interpenetration of all things, including human beings.³⁵ We will see that Novatian rejected this kind of anthropology. However, some of the Middle Platonist authors available to Novatian provided a set of doctrines more easily harmonized with his Christianity. Ample evidence demonstrates Novatian's familiarity with Cicero and Apuleius.³⁶ In the following section I address Cicero, Alcinous,³⁷ and Apuleius in order to outline an important trend in the Middle Platonic understanding of the mind. While Cicero's presentation of Platonism remains marked by the skepticism of the New Academy,³⁸ Alcinous and Apuleius, who write in the 2nd

³⁴ See Reydam-Schils' *Demiurge and Providence*, 32-40.

³⁵ R. J. Hankinson writes about *pneuma*, "The Stoics held that the world was permeated by a dynamic substance responsible at the lowest level for the cohesion of material object; at the next level up for the organization of a functioning metabolizing and self-reproducing organism; then for animal perception and voluntary power; and, finally, in humans, for cognition and understanding," "Stoicism and Medicine," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*. Edited by Brad Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 298-299. Michael J. White, however, takes note of the overriding Stoic teaching on cosmic unity and notes that *pneuma* seems to function as an extension of the divine activity if not the principle itself: "However, the problem remains that *pneuma* seems often to function in much the way that the active principle (creative fire or god) does—whereas its ontological status appears to be not even that of an element, but rather a syntheses of elements. Part of the problem here—as with respect to the ontological status of fire—may be the exiguous quantity and polemical quality of our evidence. Part of the problem may be differences, now difficult to reconstruct accurately, among various Stoic thinkers. Yet it seems reasonable to suppose that a third part of the problem is that of assimilating pre-existing traditions of natural philosophy and physical explanation into the monistic ontological framework demanded by fundamental Stoic commitments to cosmic unity and cohesion," "Stoic Natural Philosophy (Physics and Cosmology)," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, Ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 135.

³⁶ Scholars typically understand Cicero as a Stoically-influenced Platonist. McLelland, following Philip Merlan, accepts Apuleius (and Alcinous) as offering a synthesis of Plato and Aristotle. See McLelland, *God the Anonymous*, 16.

³⁷ This author is known by scholarship as either Alcinous or Albinus. For clarity's sake, I will refer throughout this dissertation to Alcinous and use Albinus only in quotations from scholars. Regarding this confusion of identity, see Dillon's comments in *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism*. Clarendon Later Ancient Philosophers. Translated with an Introduction and Commentary by John Dillon (Oxford: Clarendon; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), ix-xiii.

³⁸ Gersh writes, "In passages where he [Cicero] describes his methodology, he seems to align himself primarily with the New Academic tradition from Carneades onwards: in other words he adopts a general skepticism regarding the attainment of absolute truth, at the same time holding that some philosophical views are more probable than other. Thus, Cicero argues that he will not be bound to the dogmatic assertions of any particular school but will always seek the 'most probable' (*maxime probabile*) solution to any philosophical problem, or that he belongs to a school which pursues the probable and will

century, are unquestionably influenced by the rise of dogmatism regarding their conclusions about the mind's contact with God.³⁹

Cicero

Although Cicero declares his sympathies for Platonism,⁴⁰ he suggests at the end of *de Natura Deorum* (hereafter *Nat. d.*)⁴¹ that the Stoic line of reasoning on many of the subjects contained in this work swayed him more than the arguments of the skeptically-oriented Platonist.⁴² In this dialogue, the Stoic interlocutor links the nature of the gods with the human mind and virtues. He asks, "Now if intelligence (*mens*) and faith, virtue and concord exist in the human race, from where could these have emanated down to earth except from the gods above?"⁴³ In this passage, the Stoic attempts to establish a connection between the mind and virtues in man and their source in the divine.

The Academic's response to the Stoic shows the influence of the New Academy's skepticism. He states,

Mind, Faith, Hope, Virtue, Honour, Victory, Safety, Harmony, and other concepts of the same kind we must envisage as in essence abstractions, not as gods; for

not 'advance beyond the point where likelihood has revealed itself' (*ultra id quod veri simile occurrit progredi*)," in *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism*, 58-59.

³⁹ I am using "dogmatic" in this case as opposite to skeptical. The typical scholarly approach identifies Stoic dogmatism as eventually influencing the New Academy to turn away from its skepticism. Dillon notes, "Dogmatism revived in the Platonic tradition when Antiochus accepted the Stoic doctrine of certainty, the doctrine of the *katalêptikê phantasia*, or, as we may term it, 'cognitive impression'. The Stoic definition of a cognitive impression is as follows: 'A cognitive impression is an impression derived from an object which really exists, and which is imprinted and stamped (on the subject) *in accordance with such object, of such a kind as could not be derived from a non-existent object*,'" *Middle Platonists*, 64 (italics Dillon's).

⁴⁰ Gersh notes, "Thus, in the opening discussion of the *Academica*, Cicero describes the Old Academy as 'that school which, as you know, I approve' (*quam nos ut scis probamus*), and in another text he declares that it is difficult for him to abandon the ethical position of Antiochus," *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism*, 67-68.

⁴¹ I will make frequent reference to Cicero's *Nat. d.* in my analysis of Novatian. This work shows an Epicurean, Stoic, and Academic arguing not so much about the attributes of divinity, but about the different metaphysical conclusions each author reached based upon the different dogmas of each school.

⁴² *Nat. d.* 3.95.

⁴³ *Nat. d.* 2.79. Translations of *Nat. d.* are Rackham's, unless otherwise stated.

they are either qualities that reside within us, such as mind, hope, faith, virtue, and harmony, or they are aims to which we aspire, like honour, safety, victory. I appreciate that these are beneficial qualities, and I note that statues are dedicated in their honour; but why divine powers [*vis deorum*] should reside in them I shall understand only when my researches reveal it. [*Nat. d.* 3.61, translation Walsh]

Although noting the appreciation he has for the Stoic emphasis on such qualities and characteristics, the Academic concludes his thoughts on the matter with a comment about the limits of the epistemology:

This is about all I have to say about the nature of the gods. My purpose has been not to deny their existence, but to make you realize how hard it is to understand it, and how problematic are the explanations offered. [*Nat. d.* 3.93, translation Walsh]

For a Platonist influenced by the New Academy, the epistemological gap between the divine and the human mind remained practically unbridgeable (as opposed to theoretically unbridgeable).⁴⁴ This position stood in stark contrast to Stoic anthropology which accepted a direct connection between the mind and God. As noted above, Stoics, by the 2nd century A.D., spoke about the soul as a part of the divine.

Cicero's Academic rejects the anthropological foundations of the Stoic's comments. The mind, while sharing a function or power with the divine, is not of the same nature as the divine. Therefore, the Academic treats the idea of a direct correspondence of nature between God and the mind/virtues as false. The position of Cicero's Academic comes down to the distinction between the mind of man and the divine. As noted, Cicero himself suggests that he believed the arguments of the Stoic "approximated more nearly to a semblance of the truth."⁴⁵ This endorsement does not mean that Cicero accepted the full cosmology of Stoicism. Rather, it demonstrates the

⁴⁴ See Schofield, "Academic Epistemology," 345-350 for a discussion of the New Academy's formulations of probability.

⁴⁵ *Nat. d.* 3.95. Cicero seems to fall somewhere between the typical tenets of the New Academy and those common in Middle Platonic authors.

intellectual turn away from the New Academy's skepticism and towards what would become the Middle Platonic acceptance of the possibility for closing the epistemological gap between man's mind and the divine nature.

Alcinous

While there is no evidence Novatian knew Alcinous' writings, Alcinous' *Didaskalikos* (hereafter *Did.*) provides another important witness to the 3rd century A.D.'s intellectual climate.⁴⁶ The ideas presented in *Did.* reflect widely held philosophic and religious beliefs on divine transcendence and immanence.⁴⁷ The case is the same for Apuleius' work, except that there is evidence Novatian knew at least some of Apuleius' work.⁴⁸ The importance of these authors for my study lies in the fact that a resurgent dogmatism in Middle Platonism posited some knowledge of the divine nature. As will be pointed out in the following pages, the turn from the New Academy's skepticism did not

⁴⁶ Much in Alcinous' presentation of the interplay between transcendence and divine attributes fits Novatian's approach, even if there is no direct dependence. Perhaps of some importance to the relationship between Novatian and Apuleius is Roelof Van Den Broek's suggestion that Apuleius depended on Alcinous, in "Apuleius, Gnostics and Magicians on the Nature of God," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Alexandrian Christianity* (Leiden, Brill: 1996), 42. Since Novatian knew at least some of Apuleius' work, a possible, indirect influence might exist between Novatian's views and those of Alcinous.

⁴⁷ Regarding transcendence, Armstrong identifies two sorts. Of the second, which he says starts to show up in the first centuries A.D. and is found in Alcinous, he writes, "But the other meaning of transcendence is much more important for serious Christian thinking. This is that God is *wholly other*, different from and better than everything that we are or can know. This kind of transcendence is compatible with the deepest immanence; the two are in fact different ways of looking at the same thing," in *Christian Faith*, 8. His emphasis on "wholly other" is certainly rhetorically justified, though I am more willing to see an influence of Stoic dogmatism regarding the divine nature in the work of the Middle Platonists which I address.

⁴⁸ Dillon, *Alcinous: Handbook*, xi, notes that Alcinous' work and that of Apuleius "agree no more than might be expected for any two elementary handbooks of Platonism that might be produced at any time in the first two centuries AD," although his commentary points out numerous parallels. He also states, for example, that Apuleius' *Dogm. Plat.* "proceeds along closely parallel lines to the work of A[lcinous]," Idem. See also Gerald Sandy who suggests parallels, *The Greek World of Apuleius: Apuleius and the Second Sophistic* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 216. S. J. Harrison discusses a "considerable resemblance" between *Dogm. Plat.* and *Did.*, in *Apuleius: A Latin Sophist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 196-197. Emily Hunt likewise points out similarities in these texts, in *Christianity in the Second Century: The case of Tatian* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 80-82.

lead to a uniform position on the expressions of diving transcendence. Rather, like Cicero,⁴⁹ individual authors came to various conclusions about the mind's contact with the divine.

In reference to the Supreme God, Alcinous agrees with Plato's assertion that God is "more or less beyond description" (μικροῦ δεῖν καὶ ἄρρητον).⁵⁰ Some scholars take Alcinous' reference to this passage as an indication of his endorsement of God's absolute transcendence.⁵¹ Dillon, however, convincingly casts doubt on this interpretation. He regards the identification of "more or less" as an indication of the ability to gain some knowledge rather than inability to gain exhaustive knowledge.⁵² He therefore places greater weight on Alcinous' addition that God is "ineffable and can be grasped only by the intellect."⁵³ R. Norris suggests an apparent lack of coherence, stating, "This is the Divinity which, he [Alcinous] remarks paradoxically, is grasped by the mind even though its nature is inexpressible."⁵⁴ As we shall see, Norris' estimation of the paradoxical

⁴⁹ Gersh notes some of the most influential philosophers on Cicero: "The Stoic Diodotus was a close friend of Cicero and resided in his house for many years, in fact until the former's death. Yet more important were the influences which came to bear after 88 B.C. when Philo of Larissa, then the most eminent Academic philosopher, fled to Rome as a political refugee; and during the years 79-77 B.C. when Cicero was in Athens hearing the lectures of Antiochus of Ascalon who, in reaction against Philo, was teaching a form of dogmatic Platonism, a novel phenomenon at that date," *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism*, 55.

⁵⁰ *Did.* 10.1.

⁵¹ Hunt comments, "Alcinous' divine principle is, not surprisingly, an absolutely transcendent being. God is entirely above human forms of classification, and thus it is difficult for men to contemplate him," *Christianity in the Second Century*, 80

⁵² Dillon writes, "The characterization 'more or less beyond description (*mikrou dein kai arrhēton*)' seems to have misled some commentators into assuming that A. declares his primary divinity to be quite simply ineffable, but this is precisely what he does *not* do, by his careful qualification," *Alcinous: Handbook*, 101 (italics Dillon's). Dillon then points to Alcinous' dependence on *Timaeus* 28c: "To discover the maker and father of this universe is no light task; and having discovered him, to declare him to all men is impossible," *Idem*. He then suggests that one possible meaning of Alcinous' statement might be (like Apuleius in *Dogm. Plat.* 1.5 and *De deo Socr.* 3) that, "it is impossible to communicate the nature of the deity to *everyone*." Harrison appears to share Dillon's interpretation, *Apuleius*, 148. Cf. Wolfson who argued for the position later endorsed by Hunt, in "Negative Attributes," 145-156.

⁵³ *Did.* 10.4. Daniélou ties this passage to Plato's *Tim.* 52a, in *Gospel Message*, 332

⁵⁴ Norris, *God and World in Early Christian Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1965), 35. R. M. Grant finds Alcinous' position less problematic. Grant notes, "The gods have nothing to do with the world

nature of holding these two positions simultaneously was not shared by the second and third century authors I will address. Some scholars indirectly (and convincingly) refute Norris' conclusion by shedding light on the interplay between apophatic and kataphatic theology.⁵⁵

While declaring God's inexpressibility, Alcinous offers a list of characteristics which he believes are necessarily attributable to God. In doing so, he rejects the New Academy's skepticism when he affirms the mind's ability to grasp the divine in some way.⁵⁶ He writes,

The primary god, then, is eternal, ineffable, 'self-perfect' (that is, deficient in no respect), 'ever-perfect' (that is, always perfect), and 'all-perfect' (that is, perfect in all respects); divinity, essentiality, truth, commensurability, <beauty>, good. I am not listing these terms as being distinct from one another, but on the assumption that one single thing is being denoted by all of them. (*Did.* 10.3)⁵⁷

of sense perception, and since Mind is even better than Soul, the transcendent cause of Mind is the First God, who works unmoved (the Aristotelian principle). He always knows himself and his own thoughts, and this activity is called Form," in *Gods and the One God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 80. Grant explains Alcinous' use of negative theology as part of its popularity in philosophical and theosophical works.

⁵⁵ See, for example, McLelland, *God the Anonymous*, 15-21.

⁵⁶ By Alcinous' time, the radical skepticism of the Academy was no longer embraced, and it had moved back to the inclusion of some dogmatic positions following the teaching of Antiochus of Aschilon. See Philip Merlan's, "Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus," in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, Ed. Armstrong, A. H. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 53. However, many scholars, beyond the first half of the 20th century, seem to assume that the New Academy's skepticism continued perhaps until Plotinus. For example, Prestige takes note of Hippolytus' *Ref.* 1.20 in which he states that some Academics denied the possibility of knowledge. Prestige states, "The idea expresses something that in the full sense lies beyond the measure of man's mind. Hence the Academic school is said to have introduced the doctrine of 'universal incomprehensibility,' alleging that there is no truth to be found in the sphere either of mind or of sensation, and that the appearance of things is an illusion of human consciousness," *God in Patristic Thought*, 5-6. I take Prestige's comment to refer best to the situation prior to Novatian's time. Middle Platonists such as Alcinous and Apuleius do not easily fit Prestige's description. Frances M. Young agrees with Prestige and attributes an Aristotelian influence to the Platonic tradition on this point in his "The God of the Greeks and the Nature of Religious Language," in *Early Christian Literature and the Greek Intellectual Tradition*. Ed. W. R. Schoedel and Robert Wilken (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979), 50.

⁵⁷ Καὶ μὴν ὁ πρῶτος θεὸς αἰδιός ἐστιν, ἄρρητος, αὐτοτελὴς τούτεστιν ἀπροσδεής, ἀειτελής τούτεστιν αἰεὶ τέλειος, παντελής τούτεστι πάντη τέλειος· θειότης, οὐσιότης, ἀλήθεια, συμμετρία, ἀγαθόν. Λέγω δὲ οὐχ ὥς χωρίζων ταῦτα, ἀλλ' ὥς κατὰ πάντα ἐνὸς νοουμένου.

Alcinous distills his array of positive attributes about God down to God's simplicity.⁵⁸

The emphasis on the ultimate unity of attributes came from Stoicism, but by this period Academics also spoke this way.⁵⁹ When Alcinous refers to God, he does so in light of perceived necessary and logical categories. Among other attributes, his definition of divinity includes perfect goodness, perfect beauty, and eternity. Together, all of the attributes Alcinous brings up point to the Supreme God.

Alcinous also distinguishes between expression about the divine nature and experiences of the divine. He outlines three ways of approaching the ineffable God. Dillon describes them as 1) abstraction, 2) analogy, and 3) intuiting God in an ascent of categorical reflection.⁶⁰ These methods direct the mind towards the transcendent.⁶¹

⁵⁸ By identifying "positive attributes" in regard to Alcinous' Supreme God, I am advocating Dillon's reading of the text. In regard to the passage quoted above, he writes, "There now follows a most interesting sequence of epithets of the supreme god. The nature of these attributes has caused problems for commentators (e.g. Freudenthal (1879: 286f.); Festugière (1954: iv. 137f.); Wolfson (1952: 115-30), Invernizzi (1976: i. ch. 8), because they seem to conflict with A.'s repeated assertion (164. 7. 28; 165. 4) that God is 'ineffable' (*arrhētos*). The attributes cannot, therefore, it is argued, be describing his essence, but only serve to characterize his relations to his creation. However, it is not clear to me that that is a distinction that A. would make. Indeed, if one accepts that these epithets are taken from *Philebus* 65a..., then the first two in that passage are precisely characterizing the essence of the Good, which is the first principle," *Alcinous: Handbook*, 103. Cf. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 1-18.

⁵⁹ See Jean-Claude Fredouille's mention of unity in regard to Tertullian's incorporation of this tenet into his works, in *Tertullien et la conversion de la culture antique* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1972), 282. Plato's writings played an obvious influence on this topic. As noted above, the concepts of spirit and mind functioned as some of the most prevalent categories of divinity among pagan philosophers, even amongst those philosophers founding their ideas on negative theology. Behind these instances of divine language stand assertions of the oneness of the Supreme God. For example, Plato's *Parmenides* (see 137C-D) remained a fundamental text for later conversations of this issue. An implication of talking about the One led to discussions about divine simplicity, or whether the One contained parts. Parts, however, cannot but be discussed except through names.

⁶⁰ *Did.* 10.5-6. Dillon categorizes these as negation or abstraction (*aphairesis/via negationis*), analogy (*analogia/via analogiae*), and pre-eminence (*hyperochē/via eminentiae*). He also notes that these methods of "attaining to a concept of immaterial essence" showed up often in Middle-Platonist or Platonist-influenced authors, especially Christians, in *Middle Platonists*, 109-111. See also Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 340-343, in which he describes two of the methods as "positive ways of knowing" God, and McLelland, *God the Anonymous*, 17-21. Novatian certainly demonstrates a similarity in argumentation. See *Trin.* 3.5-6, where Novatian's concern is to declare that God "ever desir[es] to become more completely known to us and to incite our minds to His worship." However, Novatian also maintains that the Father remains unknown to direct apprehension of the mind. Origen's *Cels.* 7.42 also provides a detailed description of these three ways of knowing.

⁶¹ Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 5.

Having moved away from Academic skepticism, it is not surprising that Alcinous uses arguments typical of Stoicism and which can be found in Cicero's *Nat. d.* 2.⁶² The Academic in Cicero's work rejects Stoic methodologies as lacking any fundamental ontological connection between the ideal world and the material world.⁶³ However, by the 2nd century A.D., the Middle Platonic tendency towards a mix of idealism and dogmatism led some authors to accept the possibility of gaining knowledge about the divine through the mind's apprehension as well as through perception of the world.⁶⁴

In his treatment of the origin of the soul, Alcinous follows the Platonic tripartition model associated with *Timaeus*.⁶⁵ He attributes the highest, immortal part of the soul to the direct action of the Creator:

As for the human race, since there was a special concern on the part of the father of all [πατρὶ πάντων] and of the gods who are his offspring for this, as being most akin to the gods, the creator of the universe sent down to earth the souls [ψυχὰς] of this race in number equal to the stars... [*Did.* 16.2]

Alcinous' Supreme God takes part in making only select aspects of creation. He couches his explanation for this in terms of a principle regarding the ontological status imparted by a creator onto a work. In so doing, Alcinous takes the common position that things

⁶² *Nat. d.* is one of the most complete pictures of the Stoic system which we possess. See Paul Boyancé, "Les preuves stoïciennes de l'existence des dieux d'après Cicéron (De natura deorum, livre II)," *Hermes* 90 (1962), 45-71.

⁶³ See, for example, *Nat. d.* 3.26.

⁶⁴ This point is critical to my understanding and analysis of the philosophical influences on Novatian, since some scholars consider such epistemological categories as strictly within the bounds of Stoicism. The fact that Middle Platonists took these ideas over from Stoicism by Novatian's time will allow me to suggest the continuity of Middle Platonic influences on Novatian's articulation of epistemology and the nature of the divine in *Trin.* D. F. Kelly's article, "The Beneficial Influence of Stoic Logic," is based on the previously mentioned premise.

⁶⁵ Dillon notes of *Did.* 16, "There is nothing here that goes beyond the text of the *Timeaus*," *Alcinous: Handbook*, 137.

created by the lower gods impart mortality while the highest God necessarily imparts immortality.⁶⁶

Alcinous seems most concerned in these passages with recasting the Platonic hierarchy between Being (the highest God) and Becoming (the participation or likeness to Being which is imparted to the various levels of creation).⁶⁷ His treatment of the origins of the soul demonstrates the Academic acceptance of a natural likeness to divinity, which is marked by the soul's possession of attributes such as rationality and, in the example above, immortality. Such a position does not entail the kind of ontological sharing of divinity indicative of the Stoic form of pantheism. Rather, the passage places an emphasis on the idea that human beings share, to some degree, in divine attributes.

I categorize Alcinous' thought as an example of the second approach to the relationship between the mind and God. He does not base his theological epistemology on the supposition that the mind shares the divine nature, as in the first approach. However, Alcinous allows for some positive predications about the divine nature by suggesting that the soul shares in the gift of immortality because God took a direct role in creating it. In this case, a sharing in attributes does not equate to a sharing in the divine substance (such as the Stoics advocated). Alcinous neither accepts the skepticism of the New Academy nor rejects all epistemological contact between the mind and God—as seen in the Parmenidian version of the third approach.

⁶⁶ *Did.* 16.1: “When God had imposed order upon the universe as a whole, there were still left (uncreated) the three classes of living being which were going to be mortal, the winged, the aquatic, and those that go on land. The creation of these he now entrusted to the gods who were his offspring, to avoid the consequence that, if they were made by him, they would be immortal.” Dillon points out that Alcinous closely follows *Tim.* 41b7 for this doctrine.

⁶⁷ See Reydam-Schils for a description of this hierarchy, *Demiurge and Providence*, 30-31.

Apuleius

Apuleius' *de Deo Socratis* and *de Dogmata Platonis* (hereafter *De deo Socr.* and *Dogm. Plat.*) contain different approaches to the topics of man's contact with the divine and of man's knowledge of God. His treatment of man's nature and the divine nature receive a far fuller treatment in *Dogm. Plat.* In both works, Apuleius attempts to portray the thought of Plato, at least in part, through the lens of *Tim.* 28c, which was also quoted in Alcinous' *Did.*

Only one passage in Apuleius' *De deo Socr.* accounts for his presentation of the Supreme God. In it, Apuleius identifies three levels of gods in his description of divinity: the daemons, gods of the Olympian order, and the transcendent God of all.⁶⁸ He states,

But of the father (*parentem*) of these, who is the lord (*dominator*) and author (*auctor*) of all things (*omnium rerum*), and who is liberated from all necessity of acting or suffering, not being bound by any duty to the performance of any offices, why should I now begin to speak? Since Plato, who was endued with celestial eloquence, when employing language worthy of the immortal Gods, frequently proclaims that this cause of all things, on account of his incredible (*incredibili*) and ineffable (*ineffabili*) greatness (*maiestatis*), cannot be even moderately comprehended (*conprehendi*) by any definition, through the poverty of human speech; and that the intellectual apprehension of the God can scarcely be obtained by wise men, when they have separated themselves from body, as much as possible, through the vigorous energies of the mind (*vigore animi*). He also adds, that this knowledge sometimes shines forth with a most rapid flash, like a bright and clear light in the most profound darkness.⁶⁹ I will therefore omit the discussion of this, in which all words adequate to the amplitude of the thing are not only wanting to me, but could not even be found by my master Plato. (*De deo Socr.* 3.124; modified)⁷⁰

⁶⁸ *De deo Socr.* 1-2. Alcinous also makes a tripartite division of divinity, labeling gods below the primary God as "created gods," in *Did.* 15.1. While Alcinous explores the traditionally Platonic tripartition of Matter, Forms, and God, he also states, "God is in fact himself the creator of the universe, and of the gods and daemons, and by his will with universe admits of no dissolution," *Did.* 15.2. The God, gods, and daemons all share qualities of divinity.

⁶⁹ This passage might help to explain Justin's comment about Platonists always hoping for a vision of God. Little evidence exists in Middle Platonic sources for a vision such as Justin describes, though his description may be his own interpretation of the kind of light Apuleius suggests.

⁷⁰ Quorum parentem, qui omnium rerum dominator atque auctor est, solutum ab omnibus nexibus patiendi aliquid gerendiue, nulla uice ad alicuius rei munia obstrictum, cur e[r]go nunc dicere exordiar, cum

A comparison between this passage and Alcinous' *Did.* on the subject of God's ineffability shows that Apuleius declines to express any content similar to the attributes which Alcinous posits of the Supreme God, such as goodness, beauty, etc. However, Apuleius sees no issue with labeling the Supreme God as *parens*, *dominator*, and *auctor*, terms which often carried with them implications about God's nature, such as goodness and beauty. In regard to addressing man's intellectual grasp of God or man's ability to speak about God, Apuleius suggests that a wise man might apprehend some kind of knowledge about God. He quickly moves on from this point because Plato was apparently incapable of putting such pursuits of the mind/soul into words.⁷¹

Apuleius' statements related to divine transcendence in *De deo Socr.* do not follow the same approach as his *Dogm. Plat.* or Alcinous' *Did.* In *De deo Socr.*, Apuleius makes the difficulty of speech fundamental, while the experience of the divine remains rare enough to make such a description unsuitable for the work. Certainly, however, he does not reject all knowledge about the divine.

In *Dogm. Plat.*, however, Apuleius discusses the teachings of Plato on the nature of God in words similar to Alcinous'.⁷² He writes,

But the following were his opinions of God, that [in the first place], he is incorporeal. For he says, 'That he alone is uncircumscribed (*aperimetros*), and

Plato caelesti facundia praeditus, aequiperabilia diis immortalibus disserens, frequentissime praedicet hunc solum maiestatis incredibili quadam nimietate et ineffabili non posse penuria sermonis humani quavis oratione uel modice comprehendere, uix sapientibus uiris, cum se uigore animi, quantum licuit, a corpore remouerunt, intellectum huius dei, id quoque interdum, uelut in artissimis tenebris rapidissimo coruscamine lumen candidum intermicare? Missum igitur hunc locum faciam, in quo non mihi [quidem] tantum, sed ne Platoni quidem meo quierunt ulla uerba pro amplitudine rei suppetere.

⁷¹ A. D. Nock cites this text and states, "[I]t must, to be sure, be noted that Apuleius does not formally state that God is beyond the reach of the intellect, but he approaches this when he speaks of comprehension as coming to a few, and to them only in rare moments of illumination by grace," in his "The Exegesis of Timaeus 28 C," *VC* 16 (1962), 81. Nock then points to Apuleius' *Dogm. Plat.* 1.5 in order to compare the above statement with one suggesting the ability to conceive of God.

⁷² Harrison, *Apuleius*, 196-197.

the generator (*genitor*) of things, attracting all things to himself, blessed (*beatus*), and beatific (*beatificus*), most excellent (*optimus*), in want of nothing, and himself imparting all things.’ He likewise asserts, ‘That he is celestial (*caelestem*), ineffable (*indictum*), and incapable of being named (*innominabilem*), and in his own words, ἀόρατον, ἀδάμαστον; whose nature it is difficult to discover, and when found cannot be enunciated to many.’ These are the words of Plato: *It is difficult to discover God, and impossible when found to enunciate him to the multitude.* (*Dogm. Plat.* 1.5; modified)⁷³

Apuleius treats all of the attributes he mentions as logical necessities of divinity. I take the separate approaches of Apuleius in *De deo Socr.* and *Dogm. Plat.* as reflecting different rhetorical techniques when arguing for a distinction between the nature of God and that of man.⁷⁴ The two works differ in purpose, but the points about the divine nature stated in *Dogm. Plat.* are neither pursued in, nor denied by, *De deo Socr.*

In addition to setting forth positive divine attributes similar to Alcinous, Apuleius also categorizes existing things into two essences in *Dogm. Plat.* First essences include God, the forms, mind, and soul.⁷⁵ The second essence includes matter. By making a bifurcation between two kinds of essences, Apuleius suggests at least some kind of ontological relationship between God, forms, mind, and soul. He modifies the typical Academic separation between Being (as the Primary God) and Becoming (a participation in varying degrees of Being). As such, the reference to a “first essences” category, which

⁷³ Sed haec de Deo sentit, quod sit incorporeus. Is unus, ait, ἀπερίμετρος, genitor rerumque omnium exstructor, beatus et beatificus, optimus, nihil indigens, ipse conferens cuncta. Quem quidem caelestem pronuntiat, indictum, innominabilem, et ut ait ipse, ἀόρατον, ἀδάμαστον; cuius naturam invenire difficile est; si inuenta sit, in multos eam enuntiari non posse. Platonis haec verba sunt: Θεὸν εὐρεῖν τε ἔργον, εὐρόντα τὲ εἰς πολλοὺς ἐκφέρειν ἀδύνατον.

⁷⁴ Nock, “The Exegesis of Timaeus 28 C,” 81 fn. 3 notes that some scholars question Apuleius’ authorship of *Dogm. Plat.* Separate authorship would be one possible explanation of dogmatic discrepancy between *Dogm. Plat.* and *de Deo Soc.* However, Harrison makes a strong case for Apuleius’ authorship of both works in *Apuleius*, 203-209.

⁷⁵ In *Dogm. Plat.* 1.6, Apuleius ranks God, mind, forms, and soul (Deum esse, et mentem formasque rerum, et animam) together as the first substance/essence (*substantia/essentia*). He does not retain the singular form of the words however, but rather immediately speaks about the essences of God, forms, mind, and soul. The identification of the first essence appears to be relational to the second essence (material essence) rather than the affirmation that God, mind, forms, and soul are all the exact same essence. This topic will be further addressed again in chapter 4.

includes God, the forms, mind, and soul, probably demonstrates the influence of Stoicism. Apuleius' teaching suggests that he considers the ontological status of the first essences on a continuum of Being: the Supreme God is the fullness of Being and the forms, mind, and soul participate in (to a degree) the essence or nature of the Supreme God. For Apuleius, it seems that mind and soul's similarity to divinity, at least in terms of rationality, establishes a place on the continuum.

Apuleius says that the first essence "is comprehended by the eyes of the mind (*mentis oculis*), is always found to subsist with invariable sameness, to be equal and similar to itself, and to be that which truly is."⁷⁶ His basis for claiming knowledge about the first essence, including God, depends on the ontological connection he makes between divinity and the mind (*mens*). In *De deo Socr.*, he uses the terms *mens* and *animus* synonymous, and without any explanation for the change in terminology.⁷⁷ Between *De deo Socr.* and *Dogm. Plat.*, Apuleius consistently emphasizes the role of the mind/soul as having some natural contact with the Supreme God.⁷⁸

A brief look at Apuleius' description of the incorporeal gods in *De deo Socr.* (the work in which Apuleius refuses to speak of the Supreme God) provides a final important element to the attributes he sees as integral to divinity. He writes of the lower gods,

Plato thought these Gods to be incorporeal and animated natures, without any end or beginning, but eternal both with reference to time past and the time to come;

⁷⁶ *Dogm. Plat.* 1.6: Sed illa, quae mentis oculis comprehenditur, semper et eodem modo et sui par ac similis inuenitur, ut quae uere sit. In chapters 4 and 7 I will address the theological assertion that God is equal to himself, a formulation found in both Irenaeus and Novatian and possibly suggested by Tertullian. Without Christological concerns in mind, Apuleius gives us the framework for understanding this idea, namely that the Supreme God is simple; He neither changes nor has He an equal.

⁷⁷ For example, in *De deo Socr.* 15 and 16 Apuleius quotes authors who use *mens* and he simply replaces this term with *animus* when explaining the passages.

⁷⁸ It is important to note that in *Dogm. Plat.* Apuleius puts both *mens* and *anima* into the category of first essence, although he also uses *animus* throughout that text. In *De deo Socr.* the term he treats synonymously with *mens* is *animus*. He does not use *anima* in that work, which adds to the case for distinct authorship based on differing terminology.

spontaneously separated from the contagion of body; through a perfect intellect possessing supreme beatitude; good, not through the participation of any extraneous good, but from themselves; and able to procure for themselves every thing which is requisite, with prompt facility, with simple, unrestrained, and absolute power. (*De deo Socr.* 3.123)⁷⁹

We can compare Apuleius' statement with that of Alcinous (see *Did.* 10.3 quoted above); both describe the attributes divinity with a similar set of ideas and terms, namely goodness, eternity, self-sufficiency, and intelligence.⁸⁰ I also point out that these are similar, but not exactly the same attributes which Apuleius gives to the first essence mentioned above in the citation of *Dogm. Plat.* 1.5. When speaking of the first essence as "that which truly is" (*ut quae uere sit*), Apuleius frames the discussion around the Platonic language of Being.⁸¹ By doing so, he indicates the ontological relationship among the gods. All divine beings share in the divine nature, though he acknowledges that the difference in transcendence between the Supreme God and the lower gods makes the lower gods to some degree more comprehensible. Apuleius provides a clear example of a Platonism which identifies a hierarchy of gods sharing in the divine nature, but to different degrees. This hierarchy can be called ontological subordination.

Apuleius and Alcinous do not differ widely in their assertions about the qualities which make God, or the gods, divine. Both authors assume the same qualities for divinity, which are almost universally accepted by the philosophical schools. The point

⁷⁹ Quos deos Plato existimat naturas incorporealis, animalis, neque fine ullo neque exordio, sed prorsus ac retro aeuernas, <a> corporis contagione suapte natura remotas, ingenio ad summan beatitudinem perfecto, nullius extrarii boni participatione sed ex sese bonas et ad omnia competentia sibi promptu facili, simplici, liuero, absoluto.

⁸⁰ These qualities are repeated numerous times through Cicero's *Nat. d.*, even by the Academic who looks mostly to be a student of the New Academy's skepticism.

⁸¹ Gersh notes, "Apuleius is the first Latin writer to reestablish the metaphysical transcendence characteristic of ancient Platonism as opposed to the physical transcendence advocated by Antiochus of Ascalon, Cicero, Varro, and Seneca," *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism*, 271. Another way of stating Gersh's conclusion is that Apuleius breaks from the influence of Stoicism by downplaying physicality in his description of the divine nature.

where they differ concerns the manner by which they balance negative theology with qualities intended to represent the Supreme God. Alcinous affirms the Supreme God's ineffability while simultaneously identifying a range of divine attributes. Apuleius, in *De deo Socr.*, emphasizes transcendence of the Supreme God, though he also posits a relationship between this God and the lower gods. His *Dogm. Plat.* offers a counterbalance to *De deo Socr.*'s timidity. In the former, Apuleius identifies a range of attributes for his ineffable God in a manner similar to Alcinous' statements.

Ultimately, *Dogm. Plat.* makes an assertion which Alcinous avoids: it joins the substance of mind, soul, forms, and God into a single category of essence. This move places Apuleius into a gray area between the approach of the Stoics (a shared substance of divinity) and the second approach seen with Alcinous in which the divine attributes are imparted to man by the lower gods responsible for his creation. Although Apuleius and Alcinous share a similar range of terms for describing the ineffable God, Apuleius' theological epistemology depends, in part, on a shared category of substance (the first essences), unlike Alcinous' reliance on shared attributes.⁸²

Conclusion

My description of the philosophic environment of Novatian's time does not provide background for all of Novatian's comments on the transcendent God, although I

⁸² References above to contact with God refer not only to mental perceptions of the divine, but also to some form of a sharing of nature. I do not refer to specific interactions between humans and divine beings, which Middle Platonists continued to address through intermediaries. Merlan writes, "The theology of Apuleius makes demons indispensable. For according to him the supreme god and all the other gods are absolutely transcendental, and there is no possibility of any contact between them and man. Thus, our prayers actually go to the demons," "Greek Philosophy," 72. This analysis can only be justified if *Dogm. Plat.*'s insistence on the categorization of first and second essences goes largely ignored. Therefore, although demons may be an integral part of Apuleius' theology, this aspect cannot be attributed primarily to questions of transcendence.

will show in the next several chapters some important points of convergence and dependence. The perspectives of Cicero, Alcinous, and Apuleius demonstrate the complexity of the views about the ontological connections between man and the divine nature as well as the theological epistemologies which arise from different positions on this issue. The authors associated with the Academy, whether the New Academy or the Middle Platonism, attempted to balance what they viewed as necessary divine attributes with expressions of negative theology, which they accepted as a philosophic commitment.

Apart from a likely influence of Stoicism on Apuleius, Cicero and Alcinous did not make a straightforward association of the ontological connection between the mind/soul and the divine nature. They did, however, link their expressions of theological epistemology to a similarity of attributes between the mind/soul and God. Taking into account Apuleius' negative theology, all three authors embraced non-exhaustive descriptions of the divine nature and attributes.⁸³ In the shift from the New Academy to Middle Platonism, the trend toward dogmatism led to the acceptance of identifying divine attributes, even those of the ineffable Supreme God. Such a development away from the skepticism of the New Academy's understanding of theological epistemology remained comparatively more moderate than the dogmatic formulations found in Stoicism.

⁸³ As noted above, Apuleius' *De deo Socr.* and *Dogm. Plat.* allow only for a flash of epistemic contact between man and the Supreme God, due of course to the Supreme God's transcendence.

Chapter Two: Novatian's Transcendent God

Introduction

Chapter 1 provides an analysis of the philosophic trend towards negative theology influential to Novatian's intellectual climate. Interest in negative theology among Christian and "Gnostic" groups grew concurrently with the development of this thinking in the philosophical community, making it extremely difficult to judge specific influences. For example, Aristides' *Apology* offers a compressed presentation of most of the points which Novatian makes regarding this topic. I quote the Athenian at length because the following passage demonstrates how widespread negative theology had become. Since there is no evidence that Novatian knew Aristides' work, this passage provides proof of the widespread use of negative theology among diverse Christian writers. Aristides states,

I say, then, that God is not born, not made, an ever-abiding nature without beginning and without end, immortal, perfect, and incomprehensible. Now when I say that he is "perfect," this means that there is not in him any defect, and he is not in need of anything but all things are in need of him. And when I say that he is "without beginning," this means that everything which has beginning has also an end, and that which has an end may be brought to an end. He has no name, for everything which has a name is kindred to things created. Form he has none, nor yet any union of members; for whatsoever possesses these is kindred to things fashioned. He is neither male nor female. The heavens do not limit him, but the heavens and all things, visible and invisible, receive their bounds from him. Adversary he has none, for there exists not any stronger than he. Wrath and indignation he possesses not, for there is nothing which is able to stand against him. Ignorance and forgetfulness are not in his nature, for he is altogether wisdom and understanding; and in Him stands fast all that exists. He requires not sacrifice and libation, nor even one of things visible; He requires not aught from any, but all living creatures stand in need of him. [*Apology* 1]

As a set of creedal-like affirmations about the divine, Novatian would have little to add. However, Novatian's unique theological perspective arises from his explanations for making similar statements.

I will identify three topics in *Trin.* related to negative theology in the expression of the Father's transcendence. These include Novatian's teachings that 1) God is beyond mind or reason, 2) God's nature or substance is beyond knowing, and 3) God's name is beyond knowing. I will demonstrate Novatian's awareness of the philosophical traditions related to these topics and also the relationship between his theological position and the Christian sources which he knew.¹

God as beyond mind or reason: Trin. 2.9

In *Trin.* 2.9, Novatian rejects the ability to understand, think, or speak about the nature of God the Father.² He writes,³

For what can you worthily say or perceive about Him who is above [*maior est*] all language [*sermonibus*] and perception [*sensibus*]? Only this one thing: however we are able, however we grasp [*capimus*], however one may understand [*intellegere licet*] what God might be, if we think we will mentally grasp Him, His nature [*quale*] and His greatness [*quantum*] are not able to be understood. It is not

¹ Pollard makes the following comment about philosophical influences on theology in the East and West: "Western theologians lived in an atmosphere that was practical rather than speculative, more interested in law and action than in philosophy; the only philosophy which had any lasting influence on the life and culture of the west was Stoicism with its strongly ethical and practical emphasis. Alexandria, on the other hand, was a centre of cosmopolitan culture, where any and every philosophy and religion could gain a hearing and gather a following," *Johannine Christology*, 50. As I demonstrate below, Pollard's assumption of the absolute prominence of Stoicism in the West fails to accurately describe both the complexities of intellectual traditions which are found in an author such as Novatian and also the incorporation of certain elements of Stoicism into other philosophical schools. Chapter 1, for example, demonstrates Apuleius' teaching that the first essences include God, the forms, mind, and soul. As I noted above, the bifurcation between first and second essences suggests Stoic influence. However, because Apuleius ties this teaching into the Platonic language of Being and Becoming, he essentially converts a Stoic principle into a Middle Platonic one. Pollard's understanding of static school doctrines fails to account for interplay of dogmas among the schools and among individual authors, especially Middle Platonists.

² In chapter 4, I discuss why the references to God in *Trin.* 1-8 are references specifically to the Father.

³ DeSimone's translation is used throughout this study, unless otherwise stated.

even possible for [human] thought [*cogitationem*] to approach Him. [*Trin.* 2.9, translation Papandrea]⁴

When Novatian says that God is above language and perception, he accepts the thinking seen already in Alcinous, Apuleius, and Cicero's *Academic*. However, Novatian's thought looks very similar to some of Apuleius' comments in particular. Apuleius writes,

Plato...frequently proclaims that this cause of all things, on account of his incredible [*incredibili*] and ineffable [*ineffabili*] greatness [*maiestatis*], cannot be even moderately comprehended [*non...comprehendi*] by any definition, through the poverty of human speech [*sermonis humani*]. [*De deo Socr.* 3, slightly modified]

Although the terminology of *De deo Socr.* does not match that of *Trin.* in the two passages quoted above, both works present a similar conclusion about theological epistemology. While Novatian nowhere uses Apuleius' term *ineffibilis*, his affirmation that God remains entirely above speech or thought demonstrates his commitment to the same robust rhetoric of negative theology found in Apuleius' work. Furthermore, I take Novatian's *quale* in the above quotation to refer to the essence or substance of God,⁵ since Cicero established a precedent for this use of the term.⁶

⁴ Quid enim de eo condigne aut dicas aut sentias qui omnibus et sermonibus et sensibus maior est, nisi quod uno modo et hoc ipsum, quomodo possumus, quomodo capimus, quomodo intellegere licet, quid sit Deus, mente capiemus, si cogitauerimus id illum esse, quod quale et quantum sit non possit intellegi nec in ipsam quidem cogitationem possit uenire?

⁵ See also *Trin.* 2.4 in which Novatian uses the same terminology, stating, "Concerning Him, therefore, and concerning those things which are of Him and in Him, the mind of man cannot fittingly conceive what they are, how great they are, and of what their nature; nor has human eloquence the power to express His greatness." [De hoc ergo ac de eis quae sunt ipsius et in eo sunt nec mens hominis quae sint, quanta sint et qualia sint digne concipere potest nec eloquentia sermonis humani aequabilem maiestati eius uirtutem sermonis expromit.]

⁶ Part of Cicero's *Nat. d.* involves the investigation by the Platonist regarding the four topics brought up by the Stoic, Balbus. The second section of the discussion involves the attempt "to describe [the gods'] nature (*deinde quales essent*)," *Nat. d.* 3.6. See also *Nat. d.* 3.20: "You intended to show what the gods are like (*quales di essent*), but you actually showed them to be non-existent. For you said that it is very difficult to divert the mind from its association with the eyes; yet you did not hesitate to argue that, since nothing is more excellent than god, the world must be god, because there is nothing in the universe superior to the world. Yes, if we could but imagine the world to be alive, or rather, if we could but discern this truth with our minds exactly as we see external objects with our eyes!"

If *Trin.* 2.9 stood alone in Novatian's work, it would mirror the quotation cited from Plato's *Parmenides*, in which nothing can ever be said about God. Of course Novatian's final word on divine attributes does not rest with an unqualified negative theology. Although his theology fits into the framework established by Christian tradition, I will show in chapter 4 that his position depends upon a similar progression of language already seen in the works of Alcinous and Apuleius: the transcendent and Supreme God cannot be conceived, yet logic demands the attribution of several key categories.

Important Christian sources for Novatian's use of negative theology are Theophilus and Justin. Like Apuleius in *de Deo Soc.* 3 and Alcinous in *Did.* 10.3, Theophilus and Justin attribute ineffability to the Supreme God. Ineffability serves as a primary indication of an underlying negative theology. Theophilus writes in *To Autolycus* (hereafter *Autol.*),

Hear me, O man: the form (εἶδος) of God is ineffable (ἄρρητον) and inexpressible (ἀνέκφραστον), since it cannot be seen with merely human eyes. For he is in glory (δόξη) uncontainable (ἀχώρητος), in greatness (μεγέθει) incomprehensible (ἀκατάληπτος), in loftiness inconceivable, in strength incomparable, in wisdom unteachable, in goodness inimitable, in beneficence inexpressible. [*Autol.* 1.3]⁷

In this case, Theophilus describes God as ineffable and then proceeds to speak about the inability to comprehend or express Him. Justin likewise makes use of the same term to describe the Father in the *Dialogue with Trypho* (hereafter *Dial.*).⁸

⁷ Though Daniélou acknowledges the fact that Middle Platonists used ἄρρητος as a central description of the divine, he argues that Theophilus' use of this term "must derive from Jewish gnosis," *Gospel Message*, 331. See Carl Curry, "The Theogony of Theophilus," *VC* 42 (1988): 318-26 and Deirdre Good, "Rhetoric and Wisdom in Theophilus," *ATR* 73.3 (1991): 323-30, on the more recent trend in scholarship which sees Theophilus as having a stronger contact with Hellenistic religious and philosophical thought than Daniélou gives credit. Note, however, that Daniélou attributes Justin's use of the term explicitly to Middle Platonism and to the school of Alcinous. He then ties Theophilus' emphasis on invisibility to Middle Platonism, *Gospel Message*, 331; 333.

⁸ See, for example, *Dial.* 127, where Justin affirms that the Father is ineffable.

Like Alcinous, Theophilus, and Justin, Novatian bases his opinion in *Trin.* 2.9 on the ontological gulf he asserts between man's mind and God. Similarly, Novatian denies, in *Trin.* 2.5, that the human mind is a direct point of contact with God. He relates the greatness of God directly to the human mind's inability to conceive Him when he writes,

In fact, He is greater [*maior*] than the mind [*mente*] itself, so that His greatness [*quantus*] is inconceivable; for if He could be conceived, He would be less than the human mind which could conceive Him. He is also greater than all speech, so that He cannot be expressed; for if He could be expressed, He would be less [*minor*] than human speech, which through expressing Him would then comprehend and contain [*circumiri*] Him. [*Trin.* 2.5]⁹

Trin. 2 connects God's *quantus* (greatness) to His *quale* (essence), making them both inaccessible to the human mind. Novatian's argument in this passage amounts to preserving God's transcendence by making it a logical impossibility to exhaustively comprehend God's greatness.¹⁰ He suggests that fully comprehending God equates to containing Him, which makes the mind greater than God.

Novatian focuses part of his discussion on the visible creation as the epistemological avenue for the human mind. The visible world leads the mind to an intellectual perception of God, albeit a perception which excludes exhaustive knowledge: "Thus the human mind (*animus*), learning to know the hidden things from those which are manifest, may consider the greatness of the Maker from the greatness of His works

⁹ *Maiores enim mente ipsa nec cogitari possit quantus sit, ne si potuerit cogitari, mente humana minor sit qua concipi possit. Maior est quoque omni sermone nec edici possit, ne si potuerit edici, humano sermone minor sit, quo cum edicatur et circumiri et colligi possit.*

¹⁰ Stead uses the phrase "complete knowledge" to describe the same difficulty in terminology: "In Greek thought 'knowledge' is commonly taken to imply complete or perfect knowledge. Aristotle defines it as 'the mind's identity with its object'; and this interpretation clearly leaves no room for a knowledge which is genuine but incomplete: St. Paul's 'I know in part', 1 Corinthians 13:12. But with negative terms the situation is reversed; if 'knowledge' suggests 'complete knowledge', then 'unknowable' can be taken to mean that *complete* knowledge is impossible; it need not exclude every kind of genuine apprehension," *Philosophy*, 133.

which it sees with the eyes of the mind (*mentis oculis*).”¹¹ Novatian uses the phrase “eyes of the mind” in a different way than Apuleius, who uses the same phrase in *Dogm. Plat.* 1.6.¹² In that passage, Apuleius implies that the eyes of the mind perceive God, since he classifies both as first essences or substances. Novatian, however, rejects the essential connection between the mind and God. He treats his approach to the human mind’s inadequate conception of the divine as an anthropological issue based on the ontological difference between God and the human mind.

Theophilus makes use of a similar idea when he states that God can be seen (*blepo*) with the eyes of the soul (*ophthalmos psyche*).¹³ Theophilus’ concern appears to be most concerned with the subject of morality. He continues, “God does not become visible to those who do [bad] things unless they first *cleanse themselves from all defilement* [2 Cor. 7:1].”¹⁴ Novatian similarly connects the fact of man’s morality to his contact with God. He addresses this topic with the term for obedience: “[Man] could have avoided mortality by obedience, but he subjected himself to it by his headlong and perverse determination to be God.”¹⁵ Man’s departure from God’s company, according to Novatian, involved man forgetting or ignoring the basis of the ontological difference between him and God. Man also abandoned the desire to emulate God, which was his

¹¹ *Trin.* 3.6, modified slightly. It looks in this passage as though Novatian conflates the terms *animus* and *mens*, perhaps following the practice of Apuleius. See also *Trin.* 8.1: “All nature, whether visible or invisible, gives unceasing witness to Him. Angels adore Him, stars wonder at Him, seas bless Him, lands revere Him, and even the lower regions look up at Him. Every human mind is conscious of Him, even though it cannot express Him.” [Cui testimonium reddit tam inuisibilium quam etiam uisibilium et semper et tota natura, quem angeli adorant, astra mirantur, maria benedicunt, terrae uerentur, inferna quaeque suspiciunt, quem mens omnis humana sentit, etiam si non exprimit.]

¹² Cited in chapter 1’s section on Apuleius.

¹³ *Autol.* 1.2.

¹⁴ *Idem.* This statement by Theophilus appears to make sense in light of an eschatological vision. See *Autol.* 1.7. Though the vision of God is an important matter to Theophilus, I will simply point out here his suggestion, in *Autol.* 1.11, that a purified soul or mind results (eventually) in direct contact with God.

¹⁵ *Trin.* 1.11: qui cum illam de oboedientia posset euadere, in eandem incurrit, dum ex consilio peruerso Deus esse festinat.

purpose in being made in God's image and likeness.¹⁶ From his understanding of Genesis, Novatian teaches that man's incapacity to approach or conceive of God has to do with man's false understanding of the difference between his ontology and God's.¹⁷

Novatian also employs the common analogy of the inability to look at the sun to suggest the mind's limited capacity.¹⁸ He writes, "If the keen sight of our eyes (*oculorum acies*) grows dim by looking at the sun so that their gaze, overpowered by the bright rays that meet it, cannot look at the orb itself, our mental vision (*mentis acies*) undergoes this very same thing in its every thought of God (*cogitatione omni de Deo*)."¹⁹ Novatian may have borrowed this image from Theophilus. "For if a man cannot look upon the sun," Theophilus states, "though it be a very small heavenly body, on account of its exceeding heat and power, how shall not a mortal man be much more unable to face the glory of God, which is unutterable?"²⁰ Novatian's use of the sun analogy highlights his emphasis on God's incomprehensibility. Furthermore, by suggesting that only the mind's eye can contemplate and appreciate God's existence, Novatian rejects the idea of a shared nature between God and the mind. If Novatian knew Apuleius' *Dogm. Plat.*, he distanced his theology from the Stoically-influenced connection made between the mind and God.

¹⁶ *Trin.* 1.8.

¹⁷ I will not be addressing Novatian's eschatological vision of the Father, yet it is clear that the repaired relationship between man and God will lead not only to a sharing in divine attributes, but also man's ability to see the Father in *Trin.* 28.5.

¹⁸ The sun, for example, was used frequently in descriptions of the *via analogia* to demonstrate how one cannot look at the sun directly while needing the sun all the same in order for sight to be possible. Plato's metaphor of the sun (*Republic* 507b-509c) is an important witness to the role of the sun as the vehicle of illumination.

¹⁹ *Trin.* 2.10: Nam si ad solis aspectum oculorum nostrorum acies hebetescit, ne orbem ipsum obtutus inspiciat obuiorum sibi superatus fulgore radiorum, hoc idem mentis acies patitur in cogitatione omni de Deo.

²⁰ *Autol.* 1.3. In chapter 5, I quote Tertullian's *Prax.* 14, which ties the brightness of the sun to the Father's transcendence and invisibility. Alcinoüs uses sun imagery to suggest the opposite of Theophilus and Novatian. In *Did.* 10.5 he talks about the second way of conceiving God (through analogy): "the sun is to vision and to visible objects as the primal intellect is to the power of intellection in the soul and to its objects."

Novatian's teaching looks similar to the forms of negative theology found in the philosophic writings discussed above, and the Christian tradition offered various witnesses to the rejection of an ontological connection between the mind and the divine nature. This rejection in turn affected the Christian approach to theological epistemology and the use of negative theology. Justin, for example, highlights the tension between knowledge of God and the close association between God and the mind/soul. In the introductory section of his *Dial.*, Justin recounts his conversation with the old man, whom Justin credits with prompting his conversion to Christianity. Justin speaks of his rash acceptance of the Platonic position that the soul or mind shares the nature of the divine mind.²¹ He eventually concludes, after being challenged by the old man, that philosophers do not know the nature of the soul and therefore cannot begin to understand the nature of divinity itself.²²

Tertullian also argues for the distinction between the divine nature and the nature of the soul.²³ In *Marc.* 2.9, he rejects the idea of shared substance between God and man's soul by distinguishing between man's soul (*anima*) and the Spirit of God (*spiritus*

²¹ Justin writes in *Dial.* 4: "Plato truly states," I retorted, "that the eye of the mind has this special power, which has been given to us in order that we may see with it, when it is pure, the very Being who is the cause of everything the mind perceives, who has neither color, nor form, nor size, nor anything the eye can see, but who is beyond all essence, who is ineffable and indescribable, who alone is beautiful and good, and who comes at once into those souls which are well disposed because of their affinity to and desire of seeing Him." "What affinity, then," [the old man] asked, "have we with God? Is the soul also divine and immortal and part of the Supreme Mind itself? And as this Supreme Mind sees God, are we, in like manner, able to perceive the Deity in our mind, and thus be happy even now." "Absolutely," I replied." Justin offers evidence that the same teaching which can be found in Apuleius also made its way into Justin's Platonist source. As noted in chapter 1, Stoic doctrine appears to be the likely source of this teaching. See also Daniélou's emphasis on the Holy Spirit's role in Justin's presentation of the vision of God. Justin thereby accentuates the role of God's activity in bringing man into a more intimate relationship which contrasts with some Middle Platonists concerning the shared nature of divinity and the soul. See Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 333.

²² *Dial.* 5. The old man also leads Justin to the confession that God is uniquely immortal and thus uniquely unbegotten, against Platonic assertions of the soul and the world's immortality.

²³ See chapter 1, fn. 21. Tertullian uses the term *animus* for the mind and defines it as the faculty of the soul (*anima*), which he teaches is man's governing principle.

dei). Tertullian castigates sloppy translations of Genesis 2.7, which suggest that God breathed into man a *spiritus* rather than an *afflatus*. *Spiritus*, Tertullian remarks, is God, but *afflatus* refers to the image of God in man. This *afflatus* is man's *anima*. Tertullian works *anima* into the text as a synonym for *afflatus* in *Marc.* 2, and he eventually acknowledges that the shift in terminology can lead to objections from those who believe the soul is divine. Tertullian responds,

This very fact, that the breath is designated 'soul'—it seems as if it had changed over from the rank or condition of breath, into some lower quality or degree. 'In that case,' you object, 'you admit the soul's infirmity, which you just now denied.' Certainly, when you argue its equality with god, its immunity from sin, I claim it is weak... (*Marc.* 2.9.7)²⁴

Like other Christian authors, Tertullian's theology and anthropology depend upon the distinction between the soul's nature and God's.

This section outlined the manner by which Novatian utilizes negative theology as a boundary for theological epistemology. I also mentioned other cases in which Christian authors emphasized the Father's transcendence. The most significant similarity between Novatian, his Christian predecessors, and some Middle Platonic expression (such as Alcinous') involves the distinction in nature between the Father and the soul. Novatian describes the Father's transcendence, in part, with the suggestion that the mind's eye provides no ontological link to the divine nature and thus no theological epistemology through a teaching of shared nature. Such a position can be found in both Christian and some non-Christian authors alike, and we have seen that Novatian's argument that God must be incomprehensible owes its formulation to a common set of principles found in both Christian and Middle Platonic sources.

²⁴ Ipsum quod anima vocatus est flatus, vide ne etiam de afflatus condicione transierit in aliquam deminutiorem qualitatem. Ergo, inquis, dedisti animae infirmitatem supra negatam. Plane cum illam exis deo parem, id est delicti immunem, dico infirmam.

Rejecting God's Substantia as Spiritus: Trin. 7.1,9

Apart from the affirmation that God must be incomprehensible, Novatian's negative theology rejects the identification of God's nature as "spirit." The Gospel of John (4:24), for example, explicitly claims that God is spirit. Novatian acknowledges this fact and then refutes a literal reading of the text. He writes, "When Our Lord affirms that God is spirit I think that Christ spoke thus about the Father because He wanted to imply that something more is to be understood than merely that God is spirit."²⁵ Other authors, as I point out below, accepted "spirit" as the category which names God's nature or substance.²⁶

Novatian then points to 1 John's association of God as "love" (1 John 4:8) and "light" (1 John 1:5). In neither case, argues Novatian, are we to understand that God's substance is either love or light.²⁷ In explaining the scriptural passages which seem to identify God's substance, Novatian always invokes the greater principle of God's transcendence to demonstrate the need for a reliance on negative theology. He continues in *Trin.* 7.4: "Furthermore, if you take spirit to be the substance of God, you make God a created thing (*creaturam*) because every spirit (*spiritus*) is a created thing (*creatura*)."²⁸ Novatian concludes his exegesis of John 4:24 by pressing for a complete association of

²⁵ *Trin.* 7.1: Sed illud quod dicit Dominus spiritum Deum, puto ego sic locutum Christum de Patre, ut adhuc aliquid plus intellegi uelit quam spiritum Deum.

²⁶ Throughout the first chapter and the first half of the current chapter, my references to transcendence have referred more generally to identifying the magnitude of divine attributes. The topic of the divine substance is related to, but not the same as, the subject of divine attributes. As will be seen, especially in chapters 6 and 7, not all scholars make this distinction in addressing Novatian's theology.

²⁷ See *Trin.* 7.2, in which Novatian also quotes 1 Cor. 2:9 and then states in 7.3, "What must He be, and how great must He be who promises these things which the mind and the nature of man fail to comprehend?"

²⁸ *Trin.* 7.4: Denique si acceperis spiritum substantium Dei, creaturam feceris Deum. Omnis enim spiritus creatura est.

the term “spirit” with “creature.”²⁹ Because Novatian makes the impossibility of grasping or knowing the substance of God a centerpiece of his theology, the terms love, light, and spirit can only point toward God. No term can name God’s nature.

Theophilus likely influenced Novatian’s rejection of naming God’s nature. In *Autol.*, Theophilus writes, “If I call him Spirit, I speak of his breath; if I call him Wisdom, I speak of his offspring; if I call him Strength, I speak of his might...”³⁰ Theophilus’ insistence on God’s transcendent nature stands behind this passage. He continues in the same passage, “If I call him light, I speak of his creature.” Theophilus associates the term “light” not only with God’s nature, but also with God’s creative activity and the creature itself. He understands all terms associated with God’s nature, including spirit, as figurative. Similarly, Novatian draws attention to the association between God’s nature and light in 1 John 1:5 as an opportunity to argue for the necessity of a figurative interpretation about any term designating God’s nature.³¹

When Theophilus uses spirit as a designation for God,³² he does so having established the point that the divine nature lies beyond all terminology or classification. For example, Theophilus states, “The whole creation is surrounded by the spirit of God.”³³ The notion that God encompasses creation is central to the idea that the Creator

²⁹ Novatian adds, “Therefore it would follow that God was made (*factus*).”

³⁰ *Autol.* 1.3. Palmer argues that Novatian imitates this passage by Theophilus and makes the “inadequacy” of terms associated with God “clearer,” “Atheism, Apologetics and Negative Theology,” 258 n. 74.

³¹ See *Trin.* 7.5: “These expressions are used figuratively, rather than literally (*Sed haec figurantur potius quam ita sunt*). For in the Old Testament, God is called fire to strike fear in the hearts of sinful people by appearing as their Judge, whereas in the New Testament He is revealed as a spirit, that the Renewer and Creator of those who are dead in their sins may be acknowledged by the goodness of His mercy granted to those who believe.”

³² When Theophilus speaks about the Spirit, he almost always does so in reference to the creative spirit mentioned in Genesis or to the Holy/Prophetic Spirit who speaks through the prophets. In the case of *Autol.* 1.5, I believe that Theophilus is identifying God generally with spirit. In *Autol.* 2.4, he also claims that this identification is common to some of the philosophers.

³³ *Autol.* 1.5

has power over creation and is greater than it. Spirit indicates both God's power as well as God as a subject; spirit does not indicate God's nature as categorizable by the term itself. In this, Theophilus and Novatian share a common understanding.

However, since Novatian identifies all spirits as creatures in *Trin.* 7.4, he offers a more robust expression of negative theology than Theophilus. Where Theophilus associates light with creatures, Novatian connects spirit with creatures. By doing so, Novatian takes one of the most widespread terms for identifying divinity and empties it of the transcendent content by which even Theophilus seems to base his comment about the spirit of God surrounding the whole creation in *Autol.* 1.5. At the very least, Theophilus accepts the rhetorical force of utilizing the term spirit, with its presumed transcendent quality, while simultaneously denying its actual correspondence to the divine nature. Novatian, however, safeguards his negative theology by rejecting any correspondence between divinity and spirit in anything other than a figurative revelation.³⁴

The contrast between Novatian's theology on naming God's substance and those of Justin and Irenaeus is more extreme. Justin, for example, does not directly connect the term for spirit to an expression of negative theology. In *1 Apology* 33 (hereafter *1 Apol.*), he identifies Jesus as the Spirit and Power of God. Justin writes, "The Spirit and the Power from God cannot therefore be understood as anything else than the Word who is also the First begotten of God."³⁵ I see this passage as particularly important for two reasons. First, I began this section noting that spirit was often used as a term for

³⁴ See again *Trin.* 7.5.

³⁵ *1 Apol.* 33.

identifying God's nature. I believe Justin's passage speaks to this kind of thinking.³⁶

Second, Justin often highlights Trinitarian ideas throughout his writings, identifying the Father, Son, and Holy/Prophetic Spirit in a variety of complimentary roles.³⁷ Although Justin gives the Holy/Prophetic Spirit a considerable role in his works, *1 Apol.* 33 shows that Justin is capable of employing the typical language of his times. By identifying the Word as spirit, Justin justifies the claim he makes for the Word's divinity.³⁸

Like Justin, Irenaeus speaks about the activity of God in Trinitarian language, and he also connects the terms spirit and spiritual to the divine substance itself.³⁹ For example, when attacking the Valentinians, Irenaeus states, "If...they acknowledge that He is vacuity, then they fall into the greatest blasphemy; they deny His spiritual nature. For how can He be a spiritual being, who cannot fill even those things which are within Him."⁴⁰ Irenaeus identifies God's spiritual nature as the justification for claiming the metaphysical possibility of God's all-pervasiveness.⁴¹ In addition to Irenaeus' language

³⁶ Barnard, however, hedges on this interpretation, calling it a "difficult passage." First, he suggests that the passage "implies that, for Justin, the Spirit and the logos are two names for the same person." He then notes that, "In strict logic, and with his Middle Platonist idea of God, there is no place in Justin's thought for the Person of the Spirit as the logos carries out His functions." Barnard finally concludes, "But the fact that he has so much to say about the Spirit and refers to the traditional formulas shows that he was strongly influenced by Christian experience and worship as he knew it in the life of the Church," *The First and Second Apologies*, Translated by Leslie William Barnard (New York: Paulist Press, 1967), 149-150 n. 228. I think it more likely that Justin could comfortably move between identifying the Spirit (and Power) with the activities/nature of the divine as well as with the personal activities of a being identified as the Spirit or the Prophetic Spirit.

³⁷ See Barnard's comments about the difficulties interpreting *1 Apol.* 33's use of "Spirit" in reference to the Word, in *The First and Second Apologies*, 149-50 fn. 228.

³⁸ *Noet.* 16.1-2 shares a similar theology which centers on Jesus as the Power of God and as Spirit: "...it really was the Father's own Power, brethren,--which is the Word—that came down from heaven, and not the Father in person...What is it that has been born from him if not Spirit—that is, the Word?"

³⁹ I also recognize Irenaeus' inclusion of the idea that knowledge of God occurs only through the Son (and Spirit). See for example *Against Heresies* 3.6.3 (hereafter, *Haer.*): "For no one can know the Father, unless through the Word of God, that is, unless by the Son revealing [Him]; neither can he have knowledge of the Son, unless through the good pleasure of the Father."

⁴⁰ *Haer.* 2.13.7.

⁴¹ Cf. Tatian who embraces the categorization of God as spirit when he differentiates between a divine and a created spirit: "'God is a spirit', not pervading matter, but the constructor of material spirits and the shapes that are in matter...For the spirit that pervades matter is inferior to the more divine spirit,"

about God having a spiritual nature, M. R. Barnes notes that Irenaeus appears to refer, at least once, to the Father as the Spirit of God.⁴² This identification shows that Irenaeus was capable of using spirit as a marker for speaking about the divine substance, without sacrificing the distinctions he makes between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁴³

Justin and Irenaeus share a similar approach when they 1) accept the idea that the term “spirit” is capable of naming the divine substance and 2) point to the Trinitarian distinctions of name in which Spirit refers to the Holy Spirit. Theophilus, however, demonstrates a more pointed concern for negative theology by rejecting the identification of God’s substance as spirit or anything else. For this reason, Novatian’s negative theology displays more in common with Theophilus’ work in that both reject the categorization of God’s nature as spirit, unlike Justin and Irenaeus.

Finally, it is helpful to compare Tertullian’s classification of God’s substance as spirit to Novatian’s perspective on this topic since such a comparison demonstrates the difference between critical aspects of their theologies.⁴⁴ Tertullian’s comments make Irenaeus and Justin’s comments look timid and undeveloped in comparison. Before addressing this aspect of Tertullian’s thought, we can gain a more nuanced view his work

Oratio ad Graecos 4.2. See also *Oratio ad Graecos* 12, and 13. Tatian’s logic about God as spirit functions differently from Irenaeus’. In the case of both, however, the identification of God as spirit remains central.

⁴² Michel R. Barnes points to *Haer.* 5.2.3, which states, “And just as a cutting from the vine planted in the ground fructifies in its season, or as a corn of wheat falling into the earth and becoming decomposed, rises with manifold increase by the Spirit of God, who contains all things, and then, through the wisdom of God, serves for the use of men, and having received the Word of God, becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ,” in “Irenaeus’s Trinitarian Theology.” *NV* 7 (2009), 79. See also Anthony Briggman, *The Theology of the Holy Spirit According to Irenaeus of Lyon* (Dissertation, Marquette University, 2009), 283.

⁴³ On the other hand, Irenaeus offers a litany of God’s attributes, namely that He is entirely understanding, entirely spirit, entirely thought, etc (*Haer.* 2.13.3-4). He concludes these sections writing, “He is, however, above these properties, and therefore indescribable.”

⁴⁴ For descriptions of Tertullian’s categorization of God’s nature as spirit, see Christopher Stead, “Divine Substance in Tertullian,” *JTS* 14.1 (1963): 46-66 and E. Osborn, *Tertullian: First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 130-33.

by acknowledging his clear concern with God's transcendence.⁴⁵ Tertullian writes, for example,

The eye cannot see Him, though He is visible. He is incomprehensible, though in grace He is manifested. He is beyond our utmost thought, though our human faculties conceive of Him... This it is which gives some notion of God, while yet beyond all our conceptions—our very incapacity of fully grasping Him affords us the idea of what He really is. He is presented to our minds in His transcendent greatness, as at once known and unknown. [*Apologeticum* 17, slightly modified]⁴⁶

Such a statement could have been made by Novatian himself. We can compare, for example, *Trin.* 31.11 quoted above in which Novatian speaks of the Father as incomprehensible.⁴⁷ Likewise, I earlier pointed to Novatian's comments which mirror Tertullian's insistence that God remains beyond thought or conception.⁴⁸

Tertullian's suggestion that God is known by human faculties refers to the knowledge of God through creation rather through the connection between the mind/soul and God. In the next chapter of the *Apologeticus* (18), Tertullian speaks about the manifestation of God's sovereignty through rain and fire. He also notes the witness of the prophets who performed miracles, which were recorded for evangelization. Although Novatian does not make a similar point regarding human faculties,⁴⁹ his emphasis on

⁴⁵ Of course, neither Justin nor Irenaeus' works lack the concept of God's transcendence. However, I have found the differences in the extent to which negative theology forms the overall framework of their theologies (in this case, I refer to the inclusion of "spirit" as a category used by Justin and Irenaeus for speaking about the divine nature) as compared with Novatian's to be significant in understanding all of the topics associated with the Son's ontological subordination.

⁴⁶ *Invisibilis est, etsi videatur; incomprehensibilis, etsi per gratiam repraesentetur; inaestimabilis, etsi humanis sensibus aestimetur... Hoc est, quod deum aestimari facit, dum aestimari non capit; ita eum vis magnitudinis et notum hominibus obicit et ignotum. Et haec est summa delicti nolentium recognoscere, quem ignorare non possunt.*

⁴⁷ This is the only instance of *incomprehensibilis* in *Trin.* and Novatian's statement specifically denies the incomprehensibility of the Son since this attribute must be singularly possessed by the Father: "If He [the Word] had been incomprehensible, if He [the Word] had also possessed whatever other attributes belong to the Father, then we assert He [the Word] would have certainly occasioned the controversy of two gods that these heretics raise," *Trin.* 31.11.

⁴⁸ *Trin.* 2.9 (cited above) makes this point.

⁴⁹ Cf. Novatian's use of *humanis sensibus* as failing to understand or anticipate God's future plans for man in *Trin.* 7.3.

knowledge of God through creation appears to agree with Tertullian's *Apologeticus* 18. Finally, Tertullian insists that human beings know God by understanding man's inability to fully grasp God. Novatian, in *Trin.* 2.9, also identifies the need to realize that the only mental conception of God is the knowledge that God is beyond all thinking.

However, Tertullian also insists on categorizing God's substance as "spirit,"⁵⁰ which likely demonstrates his reliance on Stoic physics. Stoic thought included the idea that all things, including God, exist corporeally.⁵¹ Tertullian rejects any tradition similar to the negative theology shared by Theophilus and Novatian. Instead, he identifies *spiritus* with the nature of God, while he develops a variation on the theology seen above in John's Gospel, Justin, Irenaeus.

In *Prax.* 7, Tertullian exegetes John 4:24 (God is Spirit), which Novatian addressed a few decades later. Tertullian reads the passage literally: "For who will deny that God is a body, although 'God is a Spirit?' For Spirit is body, of its own kind, in its own form."⁵² He continues, "Moreover if those invisible things, whatever they are, have in God's presence both their own body and their own shape by which they are visible to God alone, how much more will that which has been sent forth from his substance not be devoid of substance."⁵³ Tertullian therefore speaks about God's substance as spirit, although a certain amount of incomprehensibility remains because of metaphysical

⁵⁰ See *De resurrectione carnis* 17, *An.* 5, and *Prax.* 7 and 26.

⁵¹ See Osborn, *Tertullian*, 131-32, for a discussion about the false assumption that corporeality and materiality are synonymous in Tertullian's mind.

⁵² *Prax.* 7: quis enim negabit deum corpus esse, etsi deus spiritus est? spiritus enim corpus sui generis in sua effigie. See also *Prax.* 26.

⁵³ *Idem.*: sed et si invisibilia illa, quaecunque sunt, habent apud deum et suum corpus et suam formam per quae sali deo visibilia sunt, quanto magis quod ex ipsius substantia emissum est sine substantia non erit.

concerns.⁵⁴ He accepts the term *spiritus* for the substance of God because of its scriptural and traditional use.⁵⁵ It is crucial to point out here that Tertullian does not make the claim that he can explain the full content of the term *spiritus*. Rather, he simply believes that *spiritus* (and any term which represents the same ideas associated with the Latin word in other languages—such as the Greek *pneuma*) correctly classifies the substance of God.

The difference between the thought of Tertullian and that of Novatian can be overestimated. Tertullian's willingness to name God's substance derives from the connection he makes between epistemology and language theory. By affirming the ability to positively identify God's substance as spirit, Tertullian does not claim exhaustive knowledge about the content of the term.⁵⁶ There is no doubt, however, that Novatian judged Tertullian's perspective to be wrong.

⁵⁴ Tertullian addresses these ideas in *Apologeticus* 17. Knowledge of the Father and ineffability share center stage, in part because of Tertullian's understanding of epistemology in light of his anthropology. Chapter 18 of Tertullian's *An.* provides a clear account of his anthropological understanding. Man's governing principle is his soul (*anima*). The soul's primary faculty of understanding objects of the intellect is the mind (*animus*). The objects of the intellect are spiritual and thus of a higher nature than the objects of the senses. However, the objects of the senses are also of great value and they are necessary to the soul as stepping stones which enable man to learn about higher truths. Tertullian states, "By what, in short, are corporeal things perceived? If it is by the soul, then the mind is a sensuous faculty, and not merely an intellectual power; for while it understands, it also perceives, because without the perception there is no understanding," *An.* 18. These comments can be summed up by saying that Tertullian identified the soul as the part of man which processes both the objects of the senses and the objects of the mind.

⁵⁵ Although this statement is accurate, it is incomplete. Tertullian does speak about divine *natura* in a general sense, which was certainly more congenial to Novatian's use. In *Against Hermogenes* (hereafter *Herm.*) 13.1-2, Tertullian attributes to God a *natura* both unique and wholly good. The idea of the divine nature being good is, for Tertullian and all other Christian authors, both a scriptural and philosophic necessity of categorization. For the majority of philosophers, divine goodness is likewise an *a priori* attribute of divinity.

⁵⁶ Similarly, Novatian states in *Trin.* 5.6, "He is simple, without any corporeal admixture—whatever be the total of the being that only He Himself knows—since He is *called* spirit (*spiritus sit dictus*)" (emphasis mine). Kelly attributes the epistemological framework of this example to the influence of Stoicism, "The Beneficial Influence of Stoic Logic," 822-823. I think positing a Stoic influence in this case is entirely unnecessary since Christian traditions seen in this chapter provide similar assertions.

The common identification between divinity and spirit led to a range of differing assertions about the topic. Irenaeus and Justin accept the general validity of the association, however their focus on language about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sets the connection in the background of their thinking. Theophilus utilizes negative theology to a greater degree than either Irenaeus or Justin. He brings the term spirit into an amorphous relationship with other terms designating divine nature or activity. For Theophilus, all the terms associated with God ultimately find their meaning in a united reference to the subject who is God. Tertullian affirms that God's substance is spirit without declaring the ability to exhaustively comprehend the term spirit. Novatian overtly rejects Tertullian's claim about naming God's substance. He embraces the negative theology gaining ground in the first few centuries, and he stakes out a more uncompromising negative theology than Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and even Theophilus. He, therefore, firmly holds that words which describe God's nature, such as spirit, are used figuratively.⁵⁷

Novatian's Non-Technical Use of Natura and Substantia in Reference to God

When Novatian rejects the naming of God's *quale* (or whatness), he does not reject the assumption that God has a substance, and he uses the terms *natura* and *substantia* when discussing God.⁵⁸ For Novatian the term *natura* expresses being in general, such as the existence of the cosmos,⁵⁹ or it sums up the qualities of a particular

⁵⁷ Again, see *Trin.* 7.5.

⁵⁸ See Papandrea, *Trinitarian Theology*, 77-81. He writes, "In Novatian's use, this word [*substantia*] is basically synonymous with *natura*, and at times also with *forma*. *Substantia* does not necessarily refer to material 'substance.' When it refers to God, it means ontological essence, in the sense of the substance of divinity as opposed to the substance of humanity. Novatian contrasts the 'passible matter' of human nature with the 'impassible substance' of divine nature," *Ibid.*, 77-78.

⁵⁹ *Trin.* 8.1.

being.⁶⁰ Therefore he speaks of the “nature of things”⁶¹ as well as the “demands of nature.”⁶² Such uses were common.⁶³ In reference to divinity, Novatian uses the term *natura* to refer to what he accepts as necessary and logical statements predicated of the Supreme God. For example, Novatian affirms the common belief that God cannot contain a diversity of elements: “But this diversity of elements cannot exist in God either by nature (*natura*) or from vice, because He cannot conceivably be made up of a union of corporeal parts.”⁶⁴ *Natura* in this instance refers to Novatian’s definition of divinity, which he bases on simplicity. Novatian speaks of divine nature by rejecting what he takes to be impossible attributes of the divine nature.

Cicero’s *Nat. d.* provides a primary background for some of Novatian’s theological terminology, such as the use of *natura*.⁶⁵ When Novatian affirms knowledge about God as Creator, he states,

He said: “I am the Lord who made the light and created the darkness,” that we may not think that a certain ‘nature’ (*naturam*)—I know not what—was the artificer of those alternations whereby the nights and days are regulated; but rather, and with greater truth, we may acknowledge God as their Creator. [*Trin.* 3.5]

DeSimone points to Cicero’s *Nat. d.* 1.100 as offering a useful comparison with the theology presented in *Trin.* 3.5.⁶⁶ In this portion of *Nat. d.*, the speaker, the Academic Cotta, criticizes the Epicurean for attacking Stoic theological epistemology:

⁶⁰ *Trin.* 6.5; 8.9.

⁶¹ *Trin.* 4.9.

⁶² *Trin.* 4.10.

⁶³ See Apuleius, *De deo Socr.* 1 for examples of both uses. Cicero’s *Nat. d.* contains too many references to list.

⁶⁴ *Trin.* 5.5.

⁶⁵ Daniélou, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 233-250.

⁶⁶ Both Desimone, *The Trinity*, 30 fn. 18, and Daniélou, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 241-242, also compare *Trin.* 3.5 to *Nat. d.* 2.58. Of course, the title of Cicero’s work indicates the fact that *natura* is a predominant and acceptable term used to describe God.

Then you censured those who argued from the splendour and the beauty of creation, and who, observing the world itself, and the parts of the world, the sky and earth and sea, and the sun, moon and stars that adorn them, and discovering the laws of the seasons and their periodic successions, conjectured that there must exist some supreme and transcendent being (*excellentem esse praestantemque naturam*) who had created these things, and who imparted motion to them and guided and governed them. [*Nat. d.* 1.100]

Both passages describe the workings of the universe, especially celestial phenomena, in light of a creator and organizer.⁶⁷ However, in *Trin.* 3.5, Novatian denounces the typical Stoic conflation of God with *natura*, which can be found elsewhere in Cicero's descriptions of Stoic cosmology.⁶⁸ According to Seneca, the Stoics used *natura* as one of the designations for the single divinity.⁶⁹ Novatian refers to God's *natura*, but only after eliminating any correlation between God and the world (*natura*).⁷⁰

Novatian treats *substantia* synonymously with *natura*, unlike Tertullian who uses *spiritus* as a term for God's *substantia*. When Novatian speaks about God's *substantia*,⁷¹ he simply affirms the fact that God has a nature, while claiming that the name of the substance is inexpressible.⁷² Tertullian, however, does not use *natura* and *substantia*

⁶⁷ Novatian's use of Isaiah 45:6-7 to support the context of Cicero's comments demonstrates, in a small but important way, his willingness to accept and clarify pagan source material if it corresponds to his understanding of Christian teaching.

⁶⁸ Gersh provides examples in *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism*, 93-99. Cicero's witness is crucial on this point as his is one of the most complete pictures of the Stoic system left to us, as is pointed out by Boyancé, "Les preuves stoéciennes," 45-71. According to Bruce Fairgray Harris, *Nat. d.* also contains invaluable information about the Academic response to Epicureanism. Harris notes, "With all its shortcomings, however, this section remains valuable as our only sizeable example of the Academic attack on the theology of the Epicureans. The nearest approach is the work of Sextus Empiricus, which is rather a compilation of skeptical arguments from all the opposing schools," in *Cicero as an Academic: A Study of De Natura Deorum* (Auckland: University of Auckland, 1961), 17-18.

⁶⁹ Aldo Setaioli points to *Naturales quaestiones* 2.45 and *De beneficiis* 4.7-8 in which *fatum*, *providentia*, *natura*, and *mundus*, among others, are all offered as names for god.. Setaioli adds, "Seneca is familiar with the Stoic doctrine of *πολυωνυμία* ('multiplicity of names'), which explained the multiplicity of the traditional gods by the one god's multiple functions addressed by corresponding multiple names," in "Seneca and the Divine: Stoic Tradition and Personal Developments," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 13:3 (Winter, 2007): 348.

⁷⁰ See Daniélou, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 242

⁷¹ E.g. *Trin.* 5.3 and 7.2.

⁷² Hence God's *substantia* is not *spiritus* in *Trin.* 7.4.

synonymously.⁷³ For him, *natura* refers to a general characteristic while *substantia* refers to a thing's essence. Novatian's understanding of these two terms shows that he chooses to emphasize God's transcendent nature rather than follow Tertullian's theology.

The foregoing presentation of the understandings of *natura* and *substantia* highlights a set of related ideas and terms which individual authors defined with flexibility. Cicero, on the one hand, used *natura* and *quale* at times to identify both the attributes and substance of God. He did not however use the word *substantia*. On the other hand, Tertullian spoke often of the *substantia* of God as *spiritus* based upon the Stoic idea that all things logically possess corporeality. Novatian uses *natura* and *substantia* interchangeably, feeling comfortable putting forward a set of positive attributes for God's nature while denying any specific term for the divine substance. Ultimately, Novatian's negative theology governs his restraint about naming God's substance as *spiritus* (or anything else), which makes his much different than Tertullian's teaching.

God's Name Beyond Knowing: Trin. 4.10

Novatian states in *Trin.* 4.10 that God's name (*nomen*) cannot be conceived or spoken. He writes,

It results from this that God's name is ineffable (*nec edici*) because it cannot even be conceived (*nec concipi*). The name of a thing connotes whatever comes under (*comprehenditur*) the demands of its nature. For a name is significant of the reality which could be grasped (*comprehendi*) from the name. [*Trin.* 4.10]⁷⁴

⁷³ See *Herm.* 17.2

⁷⁴ Ex quo effectum est ut nec nomen Dei proprium possit edici, quoniam non possit nec concipi. Id enim nomine continetur, quicquid etiam ex naturae suae condicione comprehenditur. Nomen enim significantia est eius rei quae comprehendi potuit ex nomine.

Novatian acknowledges that God has a name. However, he insists on God's transcendence when he claims that God's name must be incomprehensible.⁷⁵ The principle that to know God's name would be to intellectually grasp the transcendent is a facet of Novatian's use of negative theology.⁷⁶ According to Novatian, God's name and substance must remain ineffable, otherwise God would logically be less than divine.

Novatian explains his position on the inexpressibility and incomprehensibility of God's name by pointing to the divine Name (the Tetragrammaton) found in Exodus 3:14. He writes, "For—whatever that Being may be that is God—this must always be true of Him, that He always is God, preserving Himself by His own powers. And therefore He says: 'I am who am.' That which is has this name because it always preserves its same manner of being."⁷⁷ Novatian understands the phrase *Ego sum qui sum* as an expression of eternity and incorruptibility: God has always been and has always been the same.⁷⁸ Such attributes are philosophic commonplaces touched on earlier in this chapter and explored in greater depth in chapter 4. For Novatian, Exodus 3:14 speaks to the philosophical assertion of God's eternity; it establishes the logical necessity of a basic

⁷⁵ I will mention Novatian's use of the term *comprehendere* below in chapter 7. He uses the term only three times in the work, but a fourth instance of a form of the word appears in *Trin.* 31.11 in which he says that the Son cannot be *incomprehensibilis* like the Father.

⁷⁶ *Trin.* 4.10 continues, "However, when it is a question of something of such a nature that not even the intellectual powers themselves can form a proper concept, then how will it be expressed fittingly by a single word of designation, for it so exceeds the intellect that it is necessarily beyond the comprehension of any name?" (At quando id de quo agitur tale est, ut condigne nec ipsis intellectibus colligatur, quomodo appellationis digne uocabulo pronuntiabitur, quod dum extra intellectum est etiam supra appellationis significantiam sit necesse est?)

⁷⁷ *Trin.* 4.6: Hoc enim in ipso, quicquid illud potest quod est Deus, semper sit necesse est, ut semper sit Deus, seruans sese uirtutibus suis. Et ideo dicit: *Ego sum qui sum*. Quod enim est, ideo hoc habet nomen, quoniam eandem semper sui obtinet qualitatem.

⁷⁸ I will address *Trin.* 4 again in chapter 4. Novatian ties the logical necessity of God's eternity and incorruptibility to God's inability to change. God's eternal and unchanging self-sufficiency therefore plays a part in Novatian's articulation of God's simplicity and immutability.

philosophical proposition, rather than containing any element conducive to a mystical interpretation.⁷⁹

Novatian accepts the idea that God takes a symbolic name at times for man's benefit. He writes,

When God takes for Himself a name or manifests it for certain reasons and on certain occasions, we know that it is not so much the real nature of the name that has been made known to us as a vague symbol appointed for our use, to which men may have recourse and find that they can appeal to God's mercy through it. *Trin.* 4.11⁸⁰

First, Novatian argues that any name of God acts only as a symbol. By symbol, Novatian means that mankind is given names by which it may address God as a subject, rather than names which identify God's substance. Otherwise, a name would paradoxically (and impossibly) contain the divine nature.⁸¹ Second, we see in this passage the critical role God's activity plays in initiating a relationship with mankind in Novatian's theology.

Novatian, most likely, did not fail to notice the treatments by Justin and Tertullian on the topic of the divine name. In *2 Apol.* 6,⁸² Justin states,

⁷⁹ Justin, *1 Apol.* 63, understands Ex. 3:14 as a theophany of the Logos in which Logos proclaims the living status of the patriarchs rather than any information about God's name. He begins by affirming that no one knows the Father or the Father's name except the Son (Mt. 11:27 and Lk. 10:22). Irenaeus refers to Ex. 3:14 twice. In *Haer.* 3.6.2 it is the Father speaking and Irenaeus interprets the passage as bolstering the argument that no other gods have been mentioned by Scripture. In *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 2, Irenaeus suggests that the Word spoke this phrase, and again, his concern is on establishing identity of the single, true God. Tertullian alludes to Ex. 3:14 in *Prax.* 2 to bolster his argument that the Son shares the names which designate the Father, such as Almighty. Novatian's interpretation is relatively different from these, but his emphasis on expressing the Father through philosophical categories also makes it unsurprising.

⁸⁰ Vt merito quando nomen suum Deus ex quibusdam rationibus et occasionibus adicit et praefert, non tam legitimam proprietatem appellationis sciamus esse depromptam quam significantiam quandam constitutam, ad quam dum homines decurrunt Dei misericordiam per ipsam impetrare posse uideantur.

⁸¹ This is Novatian's core teaching in *Trin.* 4.10, which I cite above.

⁸² In *1 Apol.* 10 Justin notes that God "is called by no given name." He makes the same point more emphatically in *1 Apol.* 61: "For no one can give a name to the ineffable God; and if anyone should dare say there is one, he raves with a hopeless insanity." Barnard notes, concerning this passage, "The namelessness of God is a corollary, for Justin, to the divine Transcendence....No doubt he was aware that the Old Testament divine name was used for magical purposes and this gave an edge to his denunciation," *The First and Second Apologies*, 174 n. 376.

No proper name has been bestowed upon God, the Father of all, since He is unbegotten. For, whoever has a proper name received it from a person older than himself. The words Father, and God, and Creator, and Lord, and Master are not real names, but rather terms of address derived from His beneficent deeds.⁸³

Like Novatian's, Justin's logic regarding a divine name begins with God's eternity.⁸⁴

Eternity separates God from the process of naming, since a thing's name depends upon something older which can bestow a name. Justin argues that God stands outside of such a relationship and therefore it cannot be said that God has proper name.

Justin also singles out the name "God" and addresses its significance. He states that the term has an unknown meaning, "which is not a real name, but the expression of man's innate opinion of a thing that can scarcely be defined."⁸⁵ The overarching theory behind Justin's statement resembles Novatian's concern for identifying transcendence as the deciding factor for approaching any appellation for God. Daniélou connects Justin's name theory directly to the influence of Middle Platonism's theology derived from its use of the term ἄρρητος Daniélou writes,

[Justin] links the concept of God as ineffable with a theory of language according to which names are established (θετός) by men, but in keeping with the nature (φύσις) of the things signified. This explains why there is no proper name for God (...[see] *I Apol.* X, I; cf. *I Apol.* LXI, II; *II Apol.* VI, I), because his nature is hidden. This argument reflects the theory of language put forward by Albinus (*Ep.* VI, 10-11), and derived by him from Cratylus. [*Gospel Message*, 331-332]

⁸³ Justin defends the idea that names carry no intrinsic good or evil, but rather either truly or falsely reflect the conception behind them. See *I Apol.* 4, "Nothing good or evil is included in the mere use of a name, apart from the actions which are associated with that name." See also *I Apol.* 10 and 61.

⁸⁴ Peter Widdicombe connects Justin's understanding of God's ineffability to God's ingenerateness, in "Justin Martyr's Apophaticism," *StPatr* 36 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 313-314.

⁸⁵ Thomas Falls notes, "Tertullian expressed the same thought with those famous words: *O testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae* (*Apol.* 17)," *The First Apology, The Second Apology, Dialogue with Trypho, Exhortation to the Greeks, Discourse to the Greeks, The Monarchy; or the Rule of God*. FC 3. Translated by Thomas B. Falls (New York, Christian Heritage, 1949), 125 fn 2.

Justin's ideas stand within a philosophical debate regarding the correspondence between a thing's name and its nature.⁸⁶ The Middle Platonic influence upon Justin is apparent, since the Stoics accepted a direct correspondence between the nature of a thing and a thing's name.⁸⁷ Novatian agrees with Justin about the ineffability of the divine name, however, he differs from Justin since he accepts the idea that God has a name.⁸⁸

Tertullian continues the tradition of dismissing the possibility of knowing a proper name for God the Father. When he exegetes the Lord's Prayer in *De oratione*, he says,

The name of "God the Father" had been published to none. Even Moses, who had interrogated Him on that very point, had heard a different name. To us it has been revealed in the Son, for the Son is now the Father's new name. "I am come," he says, "in the Father's name;" and again, "Father, glorify Thy name;" and more openly, "I have manifested Thy name to men." That *name*, therefore, we pray may "be hallowed." [*De oratione* 3, modified slightly]

Tertullian appears to be making a passing reference to Exodus 3:14 in order to suggest that the new (and economically important) name for God is found in the Son. Tertullian claims that the Father never revealed His name. This suggestion defies Justin's belief that the Father has no proper name, and may have influenced Novatian's position on the

⁸⁶ Commenting on chapter 6 of Justin's *2 Apol.* and citing Alcinous' *Did.* 6.10-11, Osborn states, "The originality of this paragraph lies in the way in which two philosophical ideas, the ineffable God and the innate God, are brought from different sources and tied into the Christian gospel," *Justin Martyr* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1973), 23.

⁸⁷ Cf. D. F. Kelly, who writes, "The Stoic understanding that language unquestionably conveys reality, and yet at the same time can not contain or exhaust the reality to which it can nonetheless point, is the central thesis that attracted the church to 'the Porch' in its search for an appropriate philosophical structure through which to convey the intelligible realities of the Faith to humanity, "The Beneficial Influence of Stoic Logic," 818. The qualification I would add to Kelly's comment is to point out that the Middle Platonists, discussed above, were already moving away from the New Academy's skepticism towards a Stoically influenced epistemology. When non-exhaustive knowledge of the divine is the focus of Christian authors, it can be difficult to determine which philosophical school may have influenced them.

⁸⁸ This comment raises the question of which theologian holds to a "higher" transcendence of God the Father. Although interesting and worthy of pursuit, I understand the greater concern for this dissertation not to reside primarily with comparing the ultimate statements of transcendence between authors. The purpose of this dissertation rather is to investigate the structure of Novatian's understanding of the Father's transcendence (via negative theology and the influences of Christian and non-Christian authors) and then determine how that structure shaped his theology of the Son.

subject. However, unlike Justin and Novatian, Tertullian does not include God's eternity as part of his explanation.

In another way, Tertullian's treatment of the word "God" differs from that of Justin's and Novatian's. As described earlier, Tertullian identifies the substance of God as "spirit,"⁸⁹ and he makes the same claim for the name "God."⁹⁰ Tertullian states, "The name of *God*, so we say, has always been with Himself and in Himself, but not always that of *Lord*, for the state of being inherent in the one is different from that of the other: *God* is the name of the substance itself, that is, of the Divinity, but *Lord* is the name, not of a substance, but of a power."⁹¹ According to Tertullian, "God" names the divine substance (which is *spiritus*) apart from any consideration of His relationship with the creation,⁹² since to be Lord means to be a lord over something.⁹³

⁸⁹ Tertullian often speaks of the idea that knowledge, not only of God but of all subjects of intellectual pursuit requires language, which names in actuality the thing being discussed. See, for example, *On the Flesh of Christ* 13 in which he states, "All things will be in danger of being taken in a sense different from their own proper sense, and, whilst taken in that different sense, of losing their proper one, if they are called by a name which differs from their natural designation." Tertullian puts this same principle to use in *Prax.* 10 when he states that the Father and the Son must be distinct since they possess distinct names. In *Herm.* 5.1, Tertullian makes the reverse argument to Hermogenes, who claimed that God and Matter were distinct as demonstrated by different names and unequal in nature, though, according to Hermogenes they shared eternity, "'But God is God, and matter is matter.' As if a difference in names could prevent equality, when an identity of condition is asserted!" Tertullian argues that if both are eternal, then both must have the name nature. Offering different names for two things that share the same nature defies comprehension in Tertullian's opinion.

⁹⁰ One basis for Tertullian's logic goes back at least as far as Plato's *Sophist*. In the dialog, the Visitor and Theatetus attempt to speak about what is meant when they say "being." The Visitor states, "Surely it's absurd for someone to agree that there are two names when he maintains that there's only one thing...And it's completely absurd, and unacceptable, for someone to say that there's a name if there's no account of it...If he supposes that a thing is different from its name, then surely he's mentioning two things," *Sophist* 244c-d, translation by White.

⁹¹ *Herm.* 3.3

⁹² Minucius Felix takes a similar approach, without identifying God's substance as spirit. Rather, he concludes that God is the name which represents the totality of necessarily applicable qualities for the Supreme God. In *Octavius* 18, he writes: "He who thinks that he knows the magnitude of God, is diminishing it; he who desires not to lessen it, knows it not. Neither must you ask a name for God. God is His name. We have need of names when a multitude is to be separated into individuals by the special characteristics of names; to God, who is alone, the name God is the whole. If I were to call Him Father, you would judge Him to be earthly; if a King, you would suspect Him to be carnal; if a Lord, you will certainly understand Him to be mortal."

Novatian's emphasis on the transcendence of the Father leads him to uncompromisingly assert the ineffability both of God's substance and God's name. The fundamental difference between his and Tertullian's logic turns on the question of whether a name signifies a thing's nature. For Tertullian, the terms God and spirit name the divinity, otherwise he argues, people would not understand the object of the words. For Novatian, ignorance of God's substance does not affect knowledge of God's existence, and he believes that if the apprehension of nature follows naming (or thinking), then the incomprehensible and infinite God would find Himself somehow explicitly in the confines of a human mind. Such a suggestion Novatian discounts as logically impossible.

Novatian rejects Tertullian's conclusion about knowing the substance of God, but he does not reject the structure of Tertullian's argument. Tertullian claims that God has revealed His substance in the words "God" and "spirit." To a limited degree, Tertullian thus claims some knowledge about the substance of God. Novatian relies on Tertullian's logic to make the opposite case; Novatian denies human beings have a word for God's substance. Absent an accurate word for God's substance, Novatian claims that God's substance remains entirely transcendent. Therefore, Novatian dismisses the possibility of knowing God's substance or name, but he utilizes the form of Tertullian's argument in order to reach a different conclusion.

⁹³ Tertullian argues in *Herm.* 3.4 that the Father could not always be Father by the same logic. I address this important statement in relation to Novatian's apparent rejection of it in chapter 4.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I pointed to several important topics by which Novatian analyzes God's transcendence, making special reference to his Christian sources. The picture which emerges shows that Novatian utilizes major elements of negative theology and an expression of God's transcendence to a degree unique among his Christian predecessors. In regard to his statements about God as beyond mind or reason, God's nature or substance as beyond knowing, and God's name as beyond knowing, Novatian's allegiance lies with broadly available expressions of negative theology, especially those found in the works of Middle Platonists as seen in chapter 1. By reading Novatian in light of these Middle Platonic influences, my assessment differs from typical assessments of *Trin.* in that this study will be able to account for the distinctions which Novatian asserts between the attributes of the Father and Son. The negative theology used to discuss the Supreme God, which appears to influence Novatian's description of the Father, provides us with a framework for discussing the Father's unique ontology as it is related to the Son's. I will treat this topic most directly in chapter 7. In the next chapter, I will address the elements of Novatian's epistemology in light of chapters 1 and 2. I will show how Novatian tempers the theological philosophy which contributed to his negative theology with a Christian structure of epistemology.

Chapter Three: Theological Epistemology

Introduction

Novatian argues that man's comprehension of God would make man greater than God.¹ He bases this position on the principle that God cannot be contained (using the term *continere*), and he applies it as equally relevant to spatial and intellectual contact with God.² Positive knowledge about God would appear to conflict with Novatian's negative theology, however Novatian speaks confidently about many of God's attributes. The current chapter, with its analysis of Novatian's theological epistemology, serves as a bridge between chapter 2's analysis of Novatian's use of negative theology in proclaiming God's transcendence and chapter 4's analysis of his use of positive theology. My purpose will be to show that Novatian bases his understanding of theological epistemology on specific Christian teachings about the Father.³ In this way, we can speak about Novatian's Christian epistemology.

¹ *Trin.* 2.5: "For all eloquence is certainly dumb and every mind (*mens*) is inadequate to conceive (*cogitandum*) and to utter His greatness (*maiestatem*). In fact, He is greater (*maior*) than the mind itself, so that His greatness is inconceivable (*cogitari*); for if He could be conceived (*cogitari*), He would be less than (*minor*) the human mind (*mente humana*) which could conceive (*concipi possit*) Him."

² In chapter 4, I will present Novatian's use of *continere* to speak about God's relationship to space under the category of topological theology.

³ There is a growing body of literature focusing on Christian revelation and experience as the root of theological anthropology for some patristic authors. Clement of Alexandria, in particular, has received a great amount of attention by scholars in regard to this topic. The recent study by Dragoş Andrei Giulea makes just such a point: "[H]ow can God be known to us? The Alexandrian then concludes, in a quite Aristotelian way, by affirming that it is not demonstration that reaches the first principle, that is, God, but faith, intuition. Moreover, Clement inserts in this epistemology his Christian assumptions, producing in this way a Christian epistemology. The intuition of God is possible solely on the basis of a divine opening and revelation, a manifestation toward us, namely, God's divine grace or Logos. The intuition represents, therefore, the apprehension of this divine manifestation," "Apprehending 'Demonstrations' from the First Principle: Clement of Alexandria's Phenomenology of Faith," *JR* 89:2 (2009): 196-197. Although some philosophical traditions looked to various forms of divine inspiration, I speak in this chapter about Novatian's reliance on matters of Christian faith as justification for speaking about his Christian epistemology. See also Giulea, "Apprehending 'Demonstrations,'" 188-189 n. 2 for an extensive bibliography on Clement's understanding of faith as it is informed by philosophy.

Novatian asserts God's activity as the justification for everything he says about cosmology, anthropology, and revelation. Based on the Bible's witness, he describes the order of the universe as a cosmological principle by which all of creation gives witness to God. Novatian also treats the relationship between man and God as the culmination of all cosmology. His anthropology begins with man's creation for the purpose of imitating God's rationality. Man imitates God in a universe designed to help him understand and speak about God. Finally, Novatian identifies revelation as the most explicit source of epistemology. God offers mankind first the Spirit and the saints, and finally Christ Himself, the Son and Word, as the clearest and most specific means of knowing God.

Some Christian authors made elaborate use of the logic and terminology found in the traditions of philosophical epistemology.⁴ Although Novatian does not polemically reject philosophical epistemology, his own presentation of theological epistemology rebuffs a core philosophic position, namely the presumption of the natural or essential contact of the soul/mind with divinity. I will not spend time presenting various technical arguments of the philosophical schools regarding impressions, apprehensions, and scientific knowledge; Novatian neither sets his theological epistemology explicitly against them nor clearly embraces any discernable tradition other than Christianity, including a strong emphasis on Scripture.⁵ I will, however, point out where Novatian's epistemology resulted in conclusions similar to those held by philosophers and other

⁴ Again, studies on Clement of Alexandria dominate the scholarship on early Christian epistemology because of his strong advocacy for philosophy as the goal of the Christian gnostic. Daniélou writes, "[T]he word 'philosophy' may also denote the training aimed at the practice of exact thought, which forms part of Greek παιδεία. For philosophy in this sense Clement does acknowledge a role, a subordinate one certainly, but genuine even for the Christian," *Gospel Message*, 305. See Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 118-234 for a detailed study of Clement's interplay with philosophy.

⁵ In chapters 1 and 2, I dealt with the background of negative theology because Novatian arranged his own presentation of God's transcendence in contrast to other available models in philosophic and Christian authors. See D'Alès, *Novatien*, 31-82, for an analysis of *Trin.* as an important witness to the earliest Latin translations of the Bible in Rome.

Christian authors. I see such similarities as evidence that Novatian understood the interplay of the Christian and non-Christian intellectual traditions as partially harmonious, since the rational God establishes the rationality in all human beings. All rational creatures can begin with some perception of God, but it is in response to revelation that Novatian places man's greatest ability to know and have a relationship with God.

Cosmology Directed toward Anthropology

Trin. begins by extolling the Creator God and some specific attributes of the creation. Nearly everything mentioned about creation includes a comment about its orientation towards an anthropological purpose. For instance, Novatian notes that celestial objects "encircle the entire earth's surface to form days, months, years, seasons, signs, and other things useful for mankind."⁶ All aspects of geography, the mountains, lowlands, and plains, as well as the variety of animals were created "for the various needs of man."⁷ Novatian likewise states that lumber, agricultural fruits, and springs were created for man's benefit.⁸ God also created things of beauty so that man would have delightful things at which to look.⁹

God, however, does not structure the universe simply as a tool which enables man to prosper materially. Instead, Novatian treats the pedagogical value of God's creation as critical to his cosmology. He writes that God created the boundaries of the waters to illustrate the expectation of man's obedience to God: "They [the waters] would obey their

⁶ *Trin.* 1.2.

⁷ *Trin.* 1.3.

⁸ *Trin.* 1.4.

⁹ *Trin.* 1.5.

prescribed laws, in order that man would more readily keep God's laws, seeing that even the elements themselves obey them."¹⁰ Man should infer the importance of moral fortitude through God's ordering of nature. Furthermore, Novatian insists that the material benefits bestowed on mankind and the pedagogical example of the orderly universe contribute to a direct appreciation of the Maker. He states, "Thus, after having considered the greatness of His works, we can fittingly admire the Maker of such a might mass."¹¹

Christians, Jews, and many philosophers shared a belief that God's ordering of the world led to an anthropocentric view of cosmology.¹² Some scholars have argued that Novatian's own praise of the universe suggests the traces of an underlying Stoic cosmology in *Trin.*¹³ However, from the numerous citations and allusions to Scripture, I understand Novatian as forming his cosmological reflection and the theological epistemology on Scripture.¹⁴ His citation of Romans 1.20 is not an addendum to some philosophically articulated cosmology, but the core of his thinking:

Since we cannot see Him with the sight of our eyes, we learn from the greatness, the power, and the majesty of His works. "For since the creation of the world," says the Apostle, "His invisible attributes are clearly seen—His everlasting power also and divinity—being understood through the things that are made." Thus the

¹⁰ *Trin.* 1.7: ut diuinas leges tanto magis homo custodiret, quanto illas etiam elementa seruassent.

¹¹ *Trin.* 1.14: sic considerata operum magnitudine tantae molis digne mirari possemus artificem.

¹² Other Christian and Jewish authors relied on Genesis 1 and 2 to emphasize an anthropocentric cosmology. Stoics, Middle Platonists, and Aristotelians shared similar views. Stoics, for example, argued that mankind possesses attributes or parts of divinity which set it in a unique relationship to the divine. See Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, 51, who identifies Christians (Clement of Rome, the writer of *To Diognetus*, Tatian, Aristides, Athenagoras, Justin, Theophilus, Tertullian, Minucius Felix and Clement) and Stoics as especially developing a tradition of anthropocentric cosmology.

¹³ DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 23 n. 1, sees praise of the creation to betray Stoic influence. Other scholars have proven beyond a doubt that *Trin.* makes use of several Stoic or Stoically influenced works containing cosmological teachings. See Daniélou, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 233-250 and his article "Novatian et la De Mundo d'Apulée," in *Romantias et Christianitas*, Edited by Jan Hendrik Waszink and Willem den Boer (London: North Holland Publishing Co., 1973): 71-80, and Spanneut, *Stoicism de pères*, 340-341.

¹⁴ *Trin.* 1 contains nearly 20 possible allusions to Genesis, Psalms, and a few other texts. See DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 23-5 (notes).

human mind, learning to know the hidden things from those which are manifest, may consider the greatness of the Maker from the greatness of His works which it sees with the eyes of the mind. [*Trin.* 3.6]¹⁵

Novatian identifies the cosmos as encouraging development of the divine-human relationship, having found this idea in Scripture. *Trin.* 3.6 also provides a form of the traditional philosophical notion of the *via eminentia*.¹⁶ This is the way of knowing or understanding the divine through the world, and Novatian embraces this epistemological tradition by basing it on biblical testimony.¹⁷

Novatian asserts a universal human awareness of God in *Trin.* 8.1 as part of his theological epistemology:

All nature, whether visible or invisible, gives unceasing witness to Him. Angels adore Him, stars wonder at Him, seas bless Him, lands revere Him, and even the

¹⁵ Quem quoniam obtutu oculorum uidere non possumus, de operum magnitudine et uirtute et maiestate condiscimus. *Inuisibilia enim ipsius*, inquit apostolus Paulus, *a creatura mundi per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur, sempiterna quoque eius uirtus et diuinitas*, ut animus humanus ex manifestis occulta condiscens de operum magnitudine quae uideret mentis oculis artificis magnitudinem cogitaret.

¹⁶ We can compare Cicero's Academic. He challenges the Epicurean who had criticized, "those who took account of the magnificent and pre-eminent works of creation, who contemplated the universe itself and its parts—the sky, lands, and seas, and their adornments the sun, moon, and constellations—and who recognized the developments, changes, and transformations of the seasons, and accordingly conjectured that there was some outstanding, pre-eminent nature which had created them, and now impelled, governed and guided them," *Nat. d.* 1.100.

¹⁷ See also *Trin.* 4.1 which alludes to Jesus' comment in Luke 18:19 that God alone is good: "The Lord rightly declares that God alone is good, of whose goodness the whole world is a witness." Novatian justifies the goodness of creation with the assertion of God's goodness in Scripture. Daniélou describes Theophilus' comments in *Autol.* 1.5 (in which the soul is known by the movements of the body) as following a similar pattern: "Theophilus thus outlines two complementary ways of knowing the God who is utterly inaccessible to bodily sense. The one, the knowledge of the existence of God from his works, is taken directly from Greek philosophy. The other, that of the vision of God in the mirror of the purified soul, is ultimately Platonic; but whereas for the Platonist this purification is simply detachment from corporeity, for the Christian it is transformation by the Holy Spirit," *Gospel Message*, 334. Daniélou seems to suggest that Theophilus borrowed this doctrine from Platonism rather than to Jesus' words in Matt. 5:8. I am not sure why Daniélou uses the word "ultimately." Although Theophilus does not cite Matt. 5:8, it could just as easily be the basis of Theophilus' position. Bertil Gärtner analyzes epistemology in Jewish sources and then compares Christian epistemology with philosophic precedents, in his *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation*. Trans. Carolyn Hannay King (Uppsala: Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1955), 116-164. About Rom. 1:20, he writes "Both the verbs ("see" and "understand") thus describe how, on contemplating God's works, man can grasp enough of His nature to prevent him from the error of identifying any of the created things with the Creator, enabling him to keep his conception of the Deity free from idolatry. According to Paul, the knowledge of God thus gained from His works comprises His invisibility, everlastingness, power and divinity," *Areopagus Speech*, 137.

lower regions look up at Him. Every human mind is conscious of Him, even though it cannot express Him.¹⁸

The final phrase in the quotation makes it clear that he does not believe the affirmation of man's knowledge of God runs contrary to his negative theology. Novatian never questions knowledge of God's existence, only the comprehensiveness of articulations about Him.

Novatian also uses themes found in Genesis 1 and 2 to develop his anthropology.

He writes,

After all these things had been accomplished, He placed man at the head of the world—man made to the image of God (*imaginem Dei*), endowed with intelligence (*mentem*), discernment (*rationem*), and prudence (*prudentiam*) so that he could imitate (*imitare*) God. Although the primordial elements of his body were earthly, nevertheless the substance was infused by a heavenly and divine breath (*halitus*). [*Trin.* 1.8]¹⁹

By structuring man with intelligence, discernment, and prudence, God gives him the ability to act like and, therefore, know something about Him.²⁰ God's activity lies not only in the preliminary creation of the world and man; it also lies in the gift of breath,

¹⁸ Cui testimonium reddit tam inuisibilium quam etiam uisibilium et semper et tota natura, quem angeli adorant, astra mirantur, maria benedicunt, terrae uerentur, inferna quaeque suspiciunt, quem mens omnis humana sentit, etiam si non exprimit. The argument concerning a universal knowledge of God had a long history and is discussed in *Nat. d.* The Epicurean argues, for example, "For he [Epicurus] alone perceived, first, that the gods exist, because nature (*natura*) herself has imprinted a conception of them on the minds of all mankind. For what nation or what tribe of men is there but possesses untaught some 'preconception' of the gods?" The Academic skeptically remarks that Epicurean does not have knowledge about the beliefs of all people and then suggests that he himself thinks "that there are many nation so uncivilized and barbarous as to have no notion of any gods at all," *Nat. d.* 1.62.

¹⁹ Post quae hominem quoque mundo praeposuit, et quidem ad imaginem Dei factum, cui mentem et rationem indidit et prudentiam, ut Deum posset imitari, cuius etsi corporis terrene primordial, caelestis tamen et diuini halitus inspirata substantia.

²⁰ Irenaeus' *Haer.* 4.Preface.4 provides a similar anthropology to Novatian's: "Now man is a mixed organization of soul and flesh, who was formed after the likeness of God, and moulded by His hands, that is, by the Son and Holy Spirit, to whom also He said, 'Let Us make man.' This, then, is the aim of him who envies our life, to render men disbelievers in their own salvation, and blasphemous against God the Creator. For whatsoever all the heretics may have advanced with the utmost solemnity, they come to this at last, that they blaspheme the Creator, and disallow the salvation of God's workmanship, which the flesh truly is; on behalf of which I have proved, in a variety of ways, that the Son of God accomplished the whole dispensation [of mercy], and have shown that there is none other called God by the Scriptures except the Father of all, and the Son, and those who possess the adoption."

which somehow safeguards man as the image of God.²¹ The allusion to Gen. 2:7 indicates Novatian's affirmation of God's unique gift to man, but he does not attempt to deal with any interpretation of the passage.²² I suspect he wishes to avoid any suggestion of an outright shared nature between God and man.²³

In Novatian's thinking, obedience to God takes the place of any suggestion that a shared nature with divinity assures mankind of immortality.²⁴ Man's first path to immortal life depended on man's freedom to exercise obedience to God:

On the one hand, man ought to be free lest the image of God serve in unbecoming manner. On the other hand, a law had to be imposed that unrestrained liberty might not break forth even to contempt for its Giver. Hence, man might receive either merited rewards or due punishments as the result of his actions, recognizing these actions as his own doings, because it was in his power to act, through the movement of his mind (*mentes*) in the one or the other direction. [*Trin.* 1.10]

²¹ For Gen. 2:7's "breath," Novatian uses the word *halitus*, whereas Tertullian uses the term *flatus*.

²² The one passage which may relate to this is *Trin.* 8.9, which states, "And within their very bosom is a fire of glowing coals, to signify that this world is hastening to the fiery day of judgment, or that all the works of God are fiery, and not obscure, but full of vigor; or for fear that these beings that have sprung from terrestrial beginnings would naturally grow numb because of the rigid nature of their origin. All were endowed, therefore, with the warm nature (*calida natura*) of and interior spirit (*interioris spiritus*)."²³ Novatian's task in this passage, and *Trin.* 8.7-11, is the exegesis of Ezechiel's chariot vision. The reference to "beings" in the above quotation are not clearly directed at humans alone. I am therefore hesitant to associate the *halitus* given to man in *Trin.* 1.8 with the *calida spiritus* in *Trin.* 8.9. See Daniélou, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 242-243 and Spanneut, *Stöicism des pères*, 340-341, for a discussion of the Stoic influence on Novatian's thought concerning a warm spirit.

²³ Tertullian explained at length the difference between God's spirit and the breath given to man in *An.* 11. However, although Tertullian regarded the distinction between the natures of the soul and God as central to his thought, he also connected God's creation of the soul to the soul's ability to perceive its Creator in *Apologeticus* 17.5-6: "The soul, though it be repressed by the prison house of the body, though it be circumscribed by base institutions, weakened by lust and concupiscence, and enslaved to false gods, yet, when it revives, as from intoxication or sleep or some sickness and enjoys health again, names 'God' with this name alone because, properly speaking, He alone is true. 'Good God!' 'God Almighty!' and 'God grant it!' are expressions used by all mankind. That He is a Judge, also, is testified by the phrases: 'God sees,' and 'I commend it to God,' and 'God will reward me.' O testimony of the soul, which is by natural instinct Christian! In fine, then, the soul, as it utters these phrases, looks not to the Capitol but to heaven. It knows the abode of the living God; from Him and from there it has come." Cf. Irenaeus on the breath given to man in *Haer.* 5.1.3, quoted in the section on Irenaeus in chapter 5.

²⁴ Platonists shared the belief that the Demiurge offered the world immortality. Reydam-Schils comments on the *Timeaus*, "The universe is exempt from destruction by the will of the Demiurge, which functions as an everlasting bond. The providential involvement of the Demiurge, then, is not limited to the origin of the universe, but also guarantees its preservation," *Demiurge and Providence*, 23.

This passage serves to highlight two important points to Novatian's theology. First, he makes it clear that man's rationality works in conjunction with his freedom to obey or disobey God. Second, Novatian connects the free and righteous use of rationality to God's desire to give immortality to mankind. Novatian writes, "He [man] could have avoided mortality by obedience, but he subjected himself to it by his headlong and perverse determination to be God."²⁵ In the previous chapter, I connected this passage to man's role in abandoning the morality which God directed. This in turn led to a rupture in the divine-human relationship because of man's failed attempt to be divine himself.²⁶

Revelation

Novatian never treats the activity of pursuing knowledge of God as an exercise of an independent rational being; man never can understand his rationality as untouched by God's activities. Man's being is defined by his intellectual capacities as well as the structure of the universe, which, according to Novatian, are specific gifts of God meant to lead man towards progressive stages and expressions of theological epistemology. His view of man's understanding depends entirely on God's activity, gifts, and providence. In the previous section, I cited quotations related to cosmology and anthropology which describe man's awareness of God's existence. This awareness is nurtured by the correlation between the order found in the universe and the attributes of God. For example, an orderly and rational progression of the celestial bodies or of the seasons indicates a Creator God who is orderly and rational.

²⁵ *Trin.* 1.11.

²⁶ See above, in chapter 2's section, "God as beyond mind and reason."

In a sense, God's activities of structuring both man's capacities and organizing man's environment appear to be relatively passive activities. They describe God as He sets the world in motion and allows man the opportunity to respond to the situation. However, the most specific developments of theological epistemology, according to Novatian, involve God's constant interaction with mankind through revelation. Novatian asserts that God's revelations lead mankind into a progressively intimate relationship with Him. For this reason, Novatian writes in *Trin.* 3.5 that God "desir[es] to become more completely known to us and to incite our minds to His worship."²⁷

In regard to revelation, Scripture plays a central role in Novatian's presentation. He quotes, in one instance, several passages from Isaiah addressing God's lordship, dominance, and transcendence over materiality.²⁸ Novatian concludes by saying in *Trin.* 3.3 that "God says these things for our instruction (*scientiam*), not to boast of Himself. Nor does He seek glory for His own greatness; rather, as a Father, He desires to bestow on us God-fearing wisdom (*religiosam sapientiam*).²⁹ The term *scientia* could be used in both a broad sense of instruction on any matter, but it was also used in reference to theological epistemology. Cicero's *Nat. d.* 1.91, for example, provides the latter meaning for the term: "For you gave a full and accurate review, which caused me for one to wonder at so much learning (*scientiam*) in a Roman, of the theological doctrines of the philosophers (*de deorum natura philosophorum sententias*) from Thales of Miletus

²⁷ Qui similiter adhuc magis in notitiam nostri uolens peruenire, ad culturam sui nostros excitans animos aiebat.

²⁸ Novatian quotes Isa. 45:22-23 and 42:8 (and 48:11). He then states in *Trin.* 3.3, "Again, He says through the prophet: 'Heaven is My throne, earth the footstool under My feet: what sort of home will you build for Me, or what is the place of My rest?' [Isa. 66:1]—this to make it clear that since the world cannot contain Him, much less can a temple enclose Him."

downward.”²⁹ Novatian offers a competing understanding to the connection between *scientia* and theological investigations as the one found in *Nat. d.* by holding that our *scientia* originates from God’s activity: God develops mankind’s religious wisdom through Scripture. It does not originate from a philosophical course of study.

Elsewhere, Novatian speaks about the relationship between man’s understanding of Scripture and man’s mind being freed from certain confines. He notes that the meaning (*ratio*) of Scripture comes from an awareness of the dispensation of the historical development of man’s relationship with God.³⁰ After stating that certain parables or descriptions of God were appropriate at certain times, Novatian puts his emphasis on the development of man’s understanding. “Therefore God is not limited,” says Novatian, “but the perception of the people is limited, God [is] not confined, but the understanding nature (*rationes*) of the people’s reason (*intellectus*) is confined.”³¹

Above, I noted that Novatian identified *mens*, *ratio*, and *prudentia* as the endowments which God gave for man to imitate the divine life. God’s revelations in Scripture serve the purpose of developing man’s *ratio* to better understand his relationship to God.

After arguing that the revelations found in the Scriptures provide an essential route to knowledge about God and His will, Novatian turns to the activities of the Spirit and the Son. He says,

And this besides, wishing to draw our wild minds, both proud and rough, from rude inhumanity to gentleness, He says, "And upon whom will my Spirit rest, but

²⁹ Etenim enumerasti memoriter et copiose, ut mihi quidem admarari luberet in homine esse Romano tantam scientiam, usque a Thale Milesio de deorum natura philosophorum sententias. See also *Nat. d.* 1.116 in which the Academic criticizes the Epicurean by stating, “Piety is justice towards the gods; but how can any claims of justice exist between us and them, if god and man have nothing in common? Holiness is the science (*scientia*) of divine worship (*colendorum deorum*); but I fail to see why the gods should be worshipped if we neither have received nor hope to receive benefit from them.”

³⁰ *Trin.* 6.2.

³¹ *Trin.* 6.3, trans. Papandrea: Non igitur mediocris est Deus, sed populi mediocris est sensus, nec angustus Deus, sed rationis populi angustus est intellectus habitus.

upon the humble and the peaceful and the one who trembles at my words?" so that to some degree [humanity] might be able to acknowledge how great God is, while he learns to fear [God] by the Spirit given [to him]. [*Trin.* 3.4, trans. Papandrea, modified]³²

Here we see Novatian moving beyond a theological epistemology based on cosmology and anthropology. When man chooses to listen to God's words (presumably Scripture), God's Spirit expands or deepens the divine-human relationship.³³ A critical phrase in the above passage is "to some degree" (*aliquatenus*), implying the limited capacity for mankind to speak about God. Novatian does not suggest that a deepened relationship with God, as well as a developed sense of God's greatness, negates the limits he imposes on conceptualizing God. He does, however, argue that the Spirit is critical to maintaining the true faith:

Grounded in this Spirit, "no one" ever "says 'Anathema' to Jesus"; no one has denied that Christ is the Son of God, nor has rejected God the Creator; no one utters any words against the Scriptures: no one lays down alien and sacrilegious ordinances; no one makes contradictory laws. [*Trin.* 29.24]³⁴

³² Quique praeterea ferinos nostros animos et de agresti immanitate tumidos et abruptos ad lenitatem trahere uolens dicit: *Et super quem requiescat spiritus meus, nisi super humilem et quietum et tremementem uerba mea?*, ut Deum aliquatenus quantus sit possit agnoscere, dum illum per spiritum collatum discit timere. De Simone comments regarding this passage, "The concept of advancing from *feritas* to *humanitas* is frequent in classical Latin; cf. Lucretius 5.927; Cicero, *De officiis* 3.6.32," *The Trinity*, 30 n. 15.

³³ I take Novatian's reference to "Spirit" be a reference to the Holy Spirit. See also *Trin.* 29.2: "He [the Holy Spirit] was indeed promised by the prophet Joel but bestowed through Christ. 'In the last days,' says the prophet, 'I will pour out from My spirit upon My servants and handmaids.' And the Lord said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.'" *Trin.* 29 is entirely about the work of the Holy Spirit, and Novatian declares a lengthy list of the Spirit's activities associated with knowledge and guidance, including *Trin.* 29.10: "In fact, it is He [the Holy Spirit] who places prophets in the Church, instructs teachers, bestows the gift of tongues, effects cures and miracles, does wondrous deeds, grants the power of discerning spirits, confers the power of administration, suggests what decisions should be made, and sets in order and arranges whatever charismatic gifts there are." For a discussion of the evidence which Novatian's *Trin.* provides concerning the Roman church and charismatic activities drawn from contact with the Spirit, see Ronald Kydd, "Novatian's *De Trinitate*, 29: Evidence of the Charismatic?" *SJT* 30 (1977): 313-18.

³⁴ In hoc spiritu positus *nemo* umquam *dicit anathema Iesum*, *nemo* negauit Christum Dei Filium aut repudiauit creatorem Deum, *nemo* contra scripturas ulla sua uerba depromit, *nemo* alia et sacrilega decreta constituit, *nemo* diuersa iura conscribit.

Novatian insists that the Holy Spirit provides the only sure strength for maintaining a belief in God's revelations which lead to knowledge of Him. Departing from the truth of the Faith is a matter of heretical choice.³⁵

Novatian makes it clear that the goal and climax of revelation is Christ. The revelations of the Spirit, the prophets, and the Scriptures all point to the Son of God as the most explicit source for man's development of theological epistemology. Novatian writes,

He instructed the prophets by the Spirit, and through all these He promised Christ, His own Son, and He sent Him when He had promised to give Him. Through this He willed us to come into a knowledge (*notitiam*) (of Him) and He poured forth His abundant reserve of mercy upon us, bringing the all-sufficient Spirit to the poor and despondent. [*Trin.* 8.3, trans. Papandrea, modified slightly]³⁶

Novatian continues by noting that the Father's revelatory activity is itself the work of the Son and that the Son can lead humanity towards the most explicit acknowledgement of the Father:

And because He is so generous, benevolent, and good, lest this whole world should wither after it had turned away the streams of His grace, He willed that apostles as spiritual fathers of our human race be sent by His Son into the entire world, so that poor humanity might acknowledge its Creator. If it should choose to follow Him [Christ], the human race would have One [the Father] whom they could now address in their prayers as Father, instead of God. [*Trin.* 8.4]³⁷

³⁵ *Trin.* 30.20: "Certainly, this [heretical belief] is not due to any fault of the Heavenly Scriptures, which never can deceive, but rather results from the prejudice of human error, whereby they willed to be heretics (*qua haeretici esse uoluerunt*)."

³⁶ Prophetas spiritu instruxit et per hos omnes Filium suum Christum repromisit et quando daturum se sponderat misit. Per quem nobis in notitiam uenire uoluit et in nos indulgentiae suae sinus largos profudit, egenis et abiectis locupletem spiritum conferendo. See also *Trin.* 29.3: "Now the Lord sometimes calls the Holy Spirit the Paraclete and at other times proclaims Him to be the Spirit of truth. He is not new in the Gospel, nor has He been given in a novel way. For it was He who in the prophets reproved the people and in the apostles gave an invitation to the Gentiles."

³⁷ Et quia ultro et largus et bonus est, ne totus hic orbis auersus gratiae eius fluminibus aresceret, apostolos institutores generis nostri in totum orbem mitti per Filium suum uoluit, ut condicio generis humani agnosceret institutorem et, si sequi maluisset, haberet quem pro Deo in suis iam postulationibus Patrem diceret.

The Son, who is the image of the Father,³⁸ provides the final step towards an encounter with the Father.³⁹ Furthermore, Novatian's suggestion of an eschatological vision of the Father depends on the mediation of the Son's revelation as the image of the Father.⁴⁰

Novatian understands the topic of theological epistemology through God's activity of guiding man towards greater knowledge through progressive steps. He indicates that God's activity and initiative in cosmology, anthropology, and revelation stands behind every progressive step which man makes towards Him.

The Role of Providence and Grace

Both philosophical and Christian traditions employed the terms *providentia* and *gratia* when speaking about God's contact with the world. Below, I will briefly detail Novatian's use of these terms and their contribution to his theological epistemology.

Novatian describes God's interaction with the universe as well as His all-encompassing organization of it with the term *providentia*. Novatian writes,

His providence (*prouidentia*) has run and at present runs its course not only among individual men but also though whole cities and states, whose overthrow

³⁸ *Trin.* 28.14. Novatian places special emphasis on the Son as the image of God because the Son perfectly imitates the works of the Father. In *Trin.* 22.2, he notes that mankind is also made in the image of the Father, but that only the Son is in the "form" of God. In several passages, however, Novatian treats the idea of the Son as the image of the Father as unique. See *Trin.* 28.25 and 28.29.

³⁹ Daniélou draws attention to the central place of Christ in Clement of Alexandria's theology in words equally applicable to Novatian. He writes, "God is beyond not only bodies but minds; he is absolutely transcendent and unapproachable. He can be known only by grace, that is to say, by the revelation which he makes of himself; and this revelation is Christ. Through him alone can we have access to the abyss of the Father, since he alone knows the Father. This is no longer Middle Platonism, but the God of the Bible, the *deus absconditus*," *Gospel Message*, 342. Barnard makes the same observation about Justin Martyr regarding the Logos' role in bring man into the knowledge of God: "If the spermatik logos is the natural reason, it has seemed to some that intellectualism has conquered all, and the difference between Christ and the philosophers is merely one of degree. But grace plays always the decisive role and can alone lead to participation in the logos himself," *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 39-40. In this citation Barnard is referring to *2 Apol.* 13.

⁴⁰ See especially *Trin.* 18.3: "In fact, He is 'the image of the invisible God,' that our limited human nature and frailty might in time grow accustomed to see God the Father in Him who is the Image of God, that is, in the Son of God. Gradually and by degrees human frailty had to be strengthened by means of the Image for the glory of being able one day to see God the Father."

He predicted by the words of the prophets. In fact, His providence runs its course even through the whole world itself. He has described as consequences of its unbelief the world's punishment, its plagues, losses, and final fate. And lest anyone should think that this indefatigable providence (*infatigabilem prouidentiam*)⁴¹ of God does not also embrace the least things, the Lord said: "One of two sparrows shall not fall to the ground without the Father's Will; for even the very hairs of your head are numbered." [*Trin.* 8.5-6]⁴²

After this passage, Novatian notes God's providential care of the Israelites as they left Egypt and during the Babylonian Captivity. God, according to Novatian, takes equal interest in all things and cares for every aspect of creation.

Novatian's understanding of God's providence derives from his assertion that God contains all things.⁴³ In *Trin.* 2.1, Novatian chastises those who think that a superior God exists above the creator.⁴⁴ He states that God "contains all things" and "has enclosed all things in the bosom of His perfect greatness and power, He is always intent on His own work and pervades all things, moves all things, gives life to all things, and observes all things."⁴⁵ Novatian argues for the theological necessity of affirming God's

⁴¹ Daniélou demonstrates the influence of Apuleius' translation of Ps.-Aristotle's *de Mundo* on Novatian's theology, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 233-250. I think it likely that Novatian borrowed the phrase *infatigabilem prouidentiam* from chapter 24 of that work. In Apuleius' translation, he identifies an indefatigable power which preserves and guides the world, rather than God's actual presence: "non tamen ut corporei laboris officio orbem istum manibus suis instruxerit, sed qui quadam infatigabili prouidentia et procul posita cuncta contingit, et maximis intervallis disiuncta complectitur."

⁴² Cuius prouidentia non tantummodo singillatim per homines cucurrit aut currit, sed etiam per ipsas urbes et ciuitates, quarum exitus prophetarum uocibus cecinit, immo etiam per ipsum totum orbem, cuius propter incredulitatem exitus, plagas, deminutiones poenasque descripsit. Et ne quis non etiam ad minima quaeque Dei putaret istam infatigabilem prouidentiam peruenire, *Ex duobus*, inquit Dominus, *passeribus unus non cadet sine Patris uoluntate, sed et capilli capitis uestri omnes numerati sunt.*

⁴³ Novatian also speaks of God's providential care with the term *uoluntas*. This term allows Novatian to place the Father at the center of all divine activity regarding the world. See, for example, *Trin.* 6.7: "[Bodily members] are not necessary to God, whose works not only immediately follow His Will (*uoluntatem*) without any effort, but even proceed simultaneously with His Will (*uoluntate*)."

⁴⁴ He is most likely alluding to Marcionites, DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 26 n. 1.

⁴⁵ *Trin.* 2.1: Super quae omnia ipse continens cuncta, nihil extra se uacuum deserens, nulli deo superiori, ut quidam putant, locum reliquit, quandoquidem ipse uniuersa sinu perfectae magnitudinis et potestatis incluserit, intentus semper operi suo et uadens per omnia et mouens cuncta et uiuificans uniuersa et conspiciens tota.

creative activity and enduring care for the world against those who refuse to identify the Creator God with the Supreme God.⁴⁶

Trin. 8.5-6's description of God's providential care looks very similar to the Stoic position found in *Nat. d.* 2.164-5. Balbus, the Stoic, also declares God's care for nations, cities, and individuals. He states,

Nor is the care and providence (*consuli et provideri*) of the immortal gods bestowed only upon the human race in its entirety, but it is also wont to be extended to individuals. We may narrow down the entirety of the human race and bring it gradually down to smaller and smaller groups, and finally to single individuals. [*Nat. d.* 2.164]

The difference between Novatian's position and that of the Stoics concerns the nature of the God, rather than the resulting activity.⁴⁷ Christian theologians rejected the explicit connection between Stoic doctrine and their own presentation of God's providence,⁴⁸ in

⁴⁶ See chapter 4's section "Topological Theology," for my discussion of these passages from *Trin.* 2 and 8. See also chapter 6 in the section "All things are through the Word," for my discussion of the instrumentality of the Logos related to God's contact with the world. Such instrumentality shows up in the Logos traditions Novatian inherited from Theophilus, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Hippolytus. Middle Platonists and Aristotelians also made use of the idea of intermediate powers to describe the nature of contact between the Supreme God and the universe.

⁴⁷ Since Stoics defined divinity through rationality, they interpreted the activity of the world's ordered movement and self-sufficiency as the activity of providence. Plutarch writes in *On Stoic self-contradictions* 1052C-D, "In the same book [*On providence*] he [Chrysippus] has written clearly: 'The world alone is said to be self-sufficient because it alone has within itself everything it needs, and it gets its nourishment and growth from itself since its different parts change into one another,'" quoted in Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers* (1), 275. This position elicited the total scorn of Epicureans as seen in *Nat. d.* 1.52: "Your Stoic god seems to us to be grievously overworked. If the world itself is god, what can be less restful than to revolve at incredible speed round the axis of the heavens without a single moment of respite?" (Loeb). Aristotelians and Academics also accepted the idea of divine providence; the former speaking about power as a moderating principle between the Supreme God and all else and the former speaking about intermediate divinities; see Sandy, *The Greek World of Apuleius*, 197. Daniélou also points to the influence of *Nat. d.* as well as *Mund.* on Novatian's understanding of providence, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 238-244. Daniélou makes the following observation with which I agree: "It is clear, then, that Novatian makes use of Cicero's idea that providence penetrates everything, but it is equally evident that providence is not, in his opinion, the same as nature. It is, on the contrary, the transcendent God. Conversely, he retains from *De mundo* the idea of God's transcendence over the universe, but rejects the idea of a divine activity that can affect the world only through intermediaries. We can see from this both the complexity of Novatian's sources and the freedom with which he uses them, retaining only what was in accordance with Christian faith," 242.

⁴⁸ Wolfson provides numerous examples of Christian authors in *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, Vol. 1, Rev. 3rd Ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 83-4 and 87-8.

part because of the Stoic emphasis on fate.⁴⁹ We recall that Novatian's anthropology depends on the exercise of man's free will to gain immortality through obedience. Furthermore, Stoicism denied God's transcendence, making God's immanence appear as dependence on the world. The Stoic God could not be viewed by Christians as the Supreme God who chooses to create.

Like Novatian, Tertullian defines *providentia* as God's interactions with the world in fulfillment of His all-encompassing plan.⁵⁰ At one point, Tertullian associates *providentia* with Wisdom and Power, and he classifies it as an attribute of the divine substance rather than the substance of divinity itself, which is spirit.⁵¹ He also says that the acceptance of the concept of providence apart from the assertion of the direct guidance of God leads to mere human opinions rather than God's truth.⁵² In all cases, *providentia*, for Tertullian, corresponds to God's revelatory activities. Sometimes God acts upon individuals, and at other times He shapes the general course of history. By God's activities, argues Tertullian, we come to know Him.⁵³ Novatian does not offer the

⁴⁹ Reydams-Schils notes, "For the Stoics, then, it appears that nature, Providence, necessity, and fate all represent different aspects of one and the same active principle, the divine λόγος," *Demiurge and Providence*, 70.

⁵⁰ See, for example, *Marc.* 2.15.3, "And yet, if you were to accept the gospel in its true form, you would learn to whom applies this judgement of God who turns the fathers' sins back upon their children, namely to those who were, at a time then future, going of their own will to call down this judgement upon themselves, *His blood be on our heads and on our children's*. So then God's providence (*providentia*) in its fullness passed censure upon this which he heard long before it was spoken" (modified slightly). See also *Marc.* 2.23.3-24.2 in which Tertullian speaks about the interplay between God, individuals (Saul), and nations (Ninevites).

⁵¹ *Prax.* 26.6.

⁵² *De praescriptione haereticorum* 7.7: "[T]he Apostle expressly mentions philosophy as that which we ought to beware of, writing to the Colossians, 'Take heed lest any one beguile you through philosophy or vain deceit, according to the tradition of men,' beyond the providence of the Holy Spirit (*praeter providentiam Spiritus sancti*). The Apostle had been at Athens, and in his argumentative encounters there had become acquainted with that human wisdom which affects and corrupts the Truth, itself also being many times divided into its own heresies by the variety of its mutually antagonistic sects."

⁵³ Tertullian is well known for several strong statements about man's natural capacity to know God, especially chapter 12 in his *Apology*. There he writes, "Though under the oppressive bondage of the body, though led astray by depraving customs, though enervated by lusts and passions, though in slavery to false gods; yet, whenever the soul comes to itself, as out of a surfeit, or a sleep, or a sickness, and attains

same range of meanings for *providentia*, but he does utilize the term in such a way as to show that nothing in the creation, whether it relates to cosmology, anthropology, or the work of the Spirit and Christ, occurs apart from God's activity.

Novatian also briefly takes note of the Father's grace (*gratia*) in reference to His activities. He mentions the "streams of His grace" (*gratiae eius fluminibus*) in *Trin.* 8.4 (cited above). The "streams of grace" is a reference to the Garden of Eden and the tree of life (mentioned in *Trin.* 8.2), as well as to God's saving activity with Noah, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Novatian's use of *gratia* to convey God's care is not unique, although I am unaware of any literary parallel with this specific quotation.⁵⁴ By presenting the structure of the universe as a grace from God rather than simply as a reflection of the divine, rational nature (which Novatian did not deny), Novatian follows in a Christian tradition unlike the teachings found in the Stoic or Middle Platonic uses of the *via eminentia* argument.⁵⁵

Furthermore, God, through the Spirit, actively draws man into inspired understanding. In *Trin.* 29, Novatian writes about the Holy Spirit's many activities. He identifies the work of the Spirit in the prophets and apostles. Novatian also quotes John 16:13's promise that "when the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you to all truth."⁵⁶ "It is He [the Holy Spirit]," Novatian continues, "who strengthened their hearts and minds, who clearly brought out for them the mysteries of the Gospel, who was within

something of its natural soundness, it speaks of God." However, he tempers this statement in the next chapter, writing, "We are of your stock and nature: men are made, not born, Christians." Tertullian implies the activity and initiative of God in educating men towards divine knowledge since men need to accept the guidance of God's revelatory teachings to become Christians.

⁵⁴ We can look, for example, to Justin's *Dial.* 78 for his argument that the grace of redemption now resides with Christians rather than continuing among the Jews. This position shares similar overtones of providential care as Novatian's quotation, yet contains a supersessionism which is not a part of *Trin.*

⁵⁵ See chapter 1's section, "Alcinous," and also the conclusion of this chapter for comments on the traditional three ways of knowledge.

⁵⁶ *Trin.* 29.7.

them the enlightener of divine things.”⁵⁷ The culmination of the Spirit’s activity emanates directly from Christ, from whom grace is outpoured:

It is He who came upon the Lord like a dove after He was baptized, and He remained, living fully and entirely in Christ alone, not diminished in any proportion or division, but with all His overflowing abundance He has been given and sent, so that others might be able to obtain from Him a kind of sample of [His] graces (*gratiarum*), [and] so that streams of gifts and works (*donorum atque operum uenae*) might be drawn from the Holy Spirit living abundantly in Christ, since the spring of the whole Holy Spirit resides in Christ. [*Trin.* 29.11, trans. Papandrea]⁵⁸

Man’s knowledge about God comes from the Holy Spirit’s activity among individuals, in the graces divested through Christ’s work, as well as in the subsequent activity of the Spirit amongst the saints. Novatian therefore shares with Justin and Tertullian similar ideas about graces associated with theological epistemology.⁵⁹ Although not using the term for “grace,” Justin’s old man speaks in *Dial.* 7.3 about the need to pray for the “gates of Light” to be opened in order to understand the Gospel.⁶⁰ Justin identifies the old man as the instigator of his conversion as well as the exemplar of the intellectual defense of the faith against philosophical challenges to Christianity.

Much in Tertullian’s presentation of theological epistemology looks similar to Novatian’s. Tertullian, for example, emphasizes the idea of growth in man’s ability to

⁵⁷ *Trin.* 29.9.

⁵⁸ Hic est qui in modum columbae, posteaquam Dominus baptizatus est, super eum uenit et mansit, habitans in solo Christo plenus et totus nec in aliqua mensura aut portione mutilatus, sed cum tota sua redundantia cumulate distributus et missus, ut ex illo delibationem quandam gratiarum ceteri consequi possint, totius Sancti Spiritus in Christo fonte remanente, ut ex illo donorum atque operum uenae ducerentur, Spiritu Sancto in Christo affluenter habitante.

⁵⁹ Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 337-338, offers the example of Clement of Alexandria in describing *paidiea* as coming by the grace of God and by the Word alone. Young likewise mentions Clement in this respect and adds Origen as another example in “God of the Greeks,” 62-63. Furthermore, Young notes, “Thus the notion of divine revelation also provided justification for the Christian claim to religious knowledge. The Logos of God was not simply identified with the person incarnate in Jesus, but with revelation in the word of scripture and in the works of creation,” 63.

⁶⁰ C. J. De Vogel cites this passage and regards it as demonstrating Justin’s teaching that “‘Faith’ is based on Revelation and received only by grace,” in his “Problems Concerning Justin Martyr,” in *Mnemosyne* 4:31:4 (1978), 363.

perceive something of the divine. Osborn recounts Tertullian's position (at least against Marcion) that knowledge of God begins with the cosmos. The intellect, functioning as the activity of the soul, draws out further conclusions and finally one comes to an understanding about revelation. Osborn combines references from *Apology* 17 and also *Marc.* 1.18.2 in order to convincingly make this argument.⁶¹ In *Apology* 17.2 Tertullian writes, "[God] is incomprehensible, though in grace (*gratiam*) He is manifested."⁶² Novatian joins Tertullian in suggesting anthropological and cosmological factors which lead to a recognition of God's desire to become known to man. For both authors, *gratia* serves as a phrase indicative of God's providence and the development of theological epistemology.

Conclusion

DeSimone speaks about the difference between imperfect knowledge and knowledge of God's attributes through reason.⁶³ He notes,

He [Novatian] uses the classic three-fold method by which man can know God: (a) by way of affirmation or causation (*via affirmationis seu causalitatis*), deducing the nature of His attributes from the nature of His works; (b) by way of negation (*via negationis*), excluding the idea of finite limitation; (c) by way of intensification or eminence (*via superlationis seu eminentiae*), ascribing to God every perfection which is consistent with His infinity, to the exclusion of all quantitative and temporal measures.⁶⁴

DeSimone's comments offer a good starting place for understanding Novatian's work.⁶⁵

Novatian excludes quantitative and temporal measures in order to justify the use of the

⁶¹ Osborn, *Tertullian*, 80-81.

⁶² *Incomprehensibilis, etsi per gratiam repraesentetur.*

⁶³ DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 60.

⁶⁴ *Idem.* These methods can be found in Alcinous' *Did.* and discussed in chapter 1's section on him.

⁶⁵ Cf. Dunn, who, after listing the statements Novatian makes about God's attributes, concludes, "All the designations and names of God tell us not that God is this or that particular quality but that this is a

attributes he believes necessary to a discussion about the highest God, while accepting typical intellectual models for speaking about the divine.

Stead, however, provides an even better framework by which we can connect topics seen in chapters 1-3 of this dissertation. He suggests that negative theology, as seen among the Middle Platonists, took advantage of the growing ambivalence between knowledge and exhaustive knowledge.⁶⁶ What is apparent from chapter 1's investigation of Platonic authors is that the logical methods of both Stoicism and Aristotelianism no longer operated as foreign inclusions within the philosophical synthesis of the Middle Platonists.⁶⁷ Middle Platonists utilized negative theology to shed, and in fact counteract, the skepticism of the New Academy. Apuleius, for example, shows the possibility of a revitalized theological epistemology because of the ontological connection between first substances.⁶⁸ In terms of his theology of the Father, Novatian accepted much of what he

human attempt to try to grasp something of the ungraspable. Indeed, human capacity is very limited when it comes to God," "Diversity and Unity," 392-393.

⁶⁶ Stead provides a hypothesis for viewing the early Christian embrace of the scriptural God who is good, righteous, and merciful with the philosophic conception of God who is unknowable, incomprehensible, and ineffable. He writes, "These problems can be mitigated, though possibly not resolved, by attending to the philosophical background of the negative terms. In Greek thought 'knowledge' is commonly taken to imply complete or perfect knowledge. Aristotle defined it as 'the mind's identity with its object'; and this interpretation clearly leaves no room for a knowledge which is genuine but incomplete: St. Paul's 'I know in part', 1 Corinthians 13:12. But with negative terms the situation is reversed; if 'knowledge' suggests 'complete knowledge', then 'unknowable' can be taken to mean that *complete* knowledge is impossible; it need not exclude every kind of genuine apprehension. Thus to say that God is *akatalēptos*, incomprehensible, suggests a comparison with the Stoic *katalēptikē phantasia*, the completely certain apprehension of some perceived fact; it is not difficult to admit that God cannot be known in this fashion! Whether the escape-route which I have suggested was actually taken, I cannot say; it seems more probable that the negative adjectives were used in rhetorical, maximizing sense to stress the depth of the divine mystery, without regard for the problems that necessarily followed," in *Philosophy*, 133-134. I think Stead's explanation is very close to how Novatian thinks.

⁶⁷ Therefore, studies such as D. F. Kelly's "Beneficial Influence of Stoic Logic" prove problematic, as I pointed out above. There can be no doubt that Middle Platonism sought for greater connections with the dogmatic Platonism of the Academy without seeking wholesale agreement with Stoicism and Aristotelianism.

⁶⁸ In the introduction, I quoted Harnack as claiming that "no trace of Platonism" could be found in Novatian's work. He justified this claim, in part, by pointing to syllogistic and dialectic arguments, arguments favored by Stoics and Aristotelians, which Novatian employs in response to Monarchian teachings. As such, it appears that Harnack assumes the impossibility of Middle Platonic influence on

found in the negative theology throughout his intellectual environment. As a Christian, however, he rejected the philosophical justifications for some of these claims and reformulated the logic in harmony with his Christian beliefs. He counters the suggestion of a natural connection between man and God with a system based on the principle of the Creator God's activity and revelation.

In this chapter, I set forth the structure by which Novatian offers positive content to his theology. As I have shown, this structure depends entirely on the sense that the rational God initiates and makes possible epistemology in general, and theological epistemology in particular. The key element missing in DeSimone's discussion is the idea of God's activity as the central factor of Novatian's theological epistemology. The three ways of knowledge are not the sources of man's understanding; they merely reflect attempts at comprehending the graces which God establishes through His providential involvement with creation. Novatian's treatment of cosmology, anthropology, and revelation reflect God's activity as the source of theological epistemology. Since these topics are dealt with in a Christian framework, we can rightfully identify Novatian's epistemology as a Christian epistemology. With that principle fixed, the other significant aspect of our investigation points to the strong influence of Middle Platonic formulations of negative theology.

Novatian because Novatian chooses to use argument types from other philosophical schools. I think such an assumption fails to do justice to Novatian's knowledge of the philosophic environment.

Chapter Four: The One and Eternal Father

Introduction

In chapter 1, I pointed to a growing body of scholarship which offers a new analysis of the use of negative theology in philosophical works of the first few centuries.¹ Some scholars call attention to the formulaic and structural purpose of the combination of negative and positive language in both philosophic and “Gnostic” works,² arguing that no theological incoherence arises from the combination of negative and positive language.³ Numerous historians of early Christian thought also address the consistency of Christian authors who employ negative and positive language. Works on Justin Martyr supply some examples. Following Prestige,⁴ Osborn states, “Justin’s negative theology [did not] fight with his positive theology; even the negative attributes of God were shown to have positive consequences and his positive attributes of God were shown to have negative consequences such as the exclusion of certain kinds of worship.”⁵ According to this interpretation, Osborn sees Justin’s negative theology as intertwined with underlying positive assertions.

Novatian’s work provides a further example of the use of positive and negative theologies which Osborn describes. For instance, although he affirms the Father’s

¹ For bibliographic information, see the notes in chapter 1’s section, “Negative theology and transcendence in philosophical works.”

² See Michael A. Williams, “Negative Theologies and Demiurgical Myths in Late Antiquity,” in *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures, and Texts*. Eds. Turner, John D. and Ruth Majercik (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000): 277-302.

³ Norris’ assessment of Alcinous is an example of the earlier scholarly belief that the combination of negative and positive theological approaches produced an incoherent position. See chapter 1 in the section on Alcinous for comments by Norris and others.

⁴ Prestige writes, “The philologically privative terms connote ultimate self-dependency and universal responsibility, and their connotation is therefore positive rather than negative. The philologically positive terms imply the lack of these things and are therefore to some extent tinged with negation,” in *God in Patristic Thought*, 41

⁵ Osborn, *Justin Martyr*, 17.

transcendence through negative theology, Novatian also states that creation must come from a Being which lacks a beginning. This axiom leads Novatian to assert eternity as a positive attribute of the Supreme God.⁶

The current chapter will look at Novatian's presentation of God through his use of positive theological language, beginning with his references to the Supreme God as Father (*Pater*) and as one (*unus*).⁷ Although Novatian calls the Son "God," he only identifies the Supreme God as "Father" and as "one." Furthermore, Novatian's positive theology includes a focus on the relationship of the Father with time and space, leading me to analyze Novatian's use of the terms *aeternus*, *infinitus*, and *immensus*. These are all important terms in theological philosophy. This chapter will demonstrate that philosophical sources influence Novatian's positive theology of the Father, just as we saw that such sources influenced his negative theology.

Throughout *Trin.*, terms related to time and space carry a specific or technical meaning when Novatian attributes them to the Supreme God, because of his focus on the uniqueness of God the Father. In later chapters, I will outline Novatian's application of

⁶ *Trin.* 2.12 states, "He is, so to speak, an intelligent Being who without any beginning or ending in time engenders and fills all things and governs, for the good of all, with supreme and perfect reason, the causes of things naturally linked together." Novatian's position would have been accepted by Academics who envisioned the creation of the world out of eternal matter. Daniélou points to *Nat. d.* 2.11 as the source of Novatian's comment, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 241.

⁷ The underlying problem in analyzing a statement about the Supreme God involves identifying where negative theology ends and positive theology begins. The intellectual period which this dissertation examines provides no clear answer. I distinguish between Novatian's negative theology and positive theology in part through the idea of exhaustive knowledge. He protects God's superiority by making exhaustive knowledge about God's nature impossible. Novatian's positive theology includes all of the attributes which he takes to be required by the definition of divinity. Some of the terms which Novatian applies to God depend on avoiding incoherence. Novatian, for example, thinks that the supreme divine nature requires the attribute of eternity. Eternity, by definition of Novatian's most strict understanding, requires the rejection of God having a beginning. Both ideas, divine eternity and a lack of a beginning, I treat as positive attributes. In Novatian's thinking, eternity itself defies exhaustive knowledge. Novatian's thinking on God's eternity resembles the mathematical representation of a line capped by arrows pointing in opposite directions. Identifying the line and the arrows as indicators of time represents positive theology. The representation itself, however, retains the quality of negative theology since the symbol only indicates the idea of an infinite line.

some of the same terms to the Son by participation or through a qualified definition.⁸ By focusing on the multiple levels of meaning for select terms in Novatian, I lay the foundation for disputing several contemporary scholars who argue against or overlook this hierarchy of meaning in Novatian's terminology. For Novatian, the particular subject about whom he writes dictates the specific meaning for the term he uses.⁹ Although he had numerous scriptural passages which he might have used as proof texts for his theology, Novatian depends primarily on a philosophical and logical approach for his positive attributes which describe the highest God as Father, one, eternal, infinite, and immense. For this reason, I will demonstrate that Novatian's theology of the Father is indebted to the theological philosophy of his time, particularly that which was represented by Middle Platonists. In chapters 6 and 7, I will contrast his philosophically-based approach of speaking about the Father's attributes with his dependence on the Scriptures in articulating the Son's attributes.

The Supreme God Is the Father

When Novatian dismisses the possibility of knowing God's name,¹⁰ he does so based on the philosophical principle, shared by Tertullian, that a thing's name designates its nature or its attributes.¹¹ However, from the beginning of *Trin.*, Novatian identifies the Supreme God, like the Middle Platonists and Aristotelians, with the assertion that this

⁸ One example of this can be found in *Trin.* 20. There Novatian argues that the Son should rightly be named God because the Scriptures (e.g. Ps. 81 and Exod. 7:1) identify both angels and humans as gods. Novatian's point is one of linguistic degree: if angels and humans can be identified with the term god in an appropriate fashion, then a greater justification exists for claiming the Son to be God. See also Novatian's conclusion of this topic in *Trin.* 20.8-9.

⁹ Such a method is prevalent in Tertullian's work. See the notes in the next section.

¹⁰ See my analysis of *Trin.* 4.10-12 in chapter 2's section, "God's name is beyond knowing."

¹¹ *Trin.* 4.10: "The name of a thing connotes whatever comes under the demands of its nature." Tertullian, as shown in chapter 2, uses this principle to claim that God's nature is identifiable as spirit.

Being creates and cares for creation.¹² In *Trin.* 1.1 Novatian starts his treatise by referencing the *regula*: “The rule of truth requires that we believe, first in God the Father and almighty Lord, the most perfect Creator (*conditorem*) of all things.”¹³ Novatian calls the Supreme God *conditor*, and other terms throughout the work function as synonyms to this identification, namely *artifex*,¹⁴ *parens*,¹⁵ and *institutor*.¹⁶ Some of these terms shared a strong presence in philosophical works, such as *parens*.¹⁷ In another passage where he brings together some of these terms, Novatian states, “We acknowledge, therefore, and know that He is God, the Creator (*conditor*) of all things; their Lord, because of His power; their Author (*parentem*), because of creation.”¹⁸ Novatian assumes a necessary link between the Supreme God’s initial creative activity and God’s continued care and preservation.¹⁹

Novatian insists on the role of Christian revelation for the ability to recognize the Supreme God who creates as the “Father.” God sent his Son and the apostles, “so that poor humanity might acknowledge its Creator (*institutores*). If it should choose to follow Him, the human race would have One whom they could now address in their

¹² Epicureans were frequently recognized as unique in rejecting divine providential care; see Hippolytus’ *Ref.* 1.19. Although Stoic theology emphasized the rational divine substance which pervades all things, their rejection of a personally distinct God led to the charge by some Christians of divine indifference. Theophilus, in *Autol.* 2.4, accuses the Stoics of denying a personal creator and therefore not believing in the same kind of divinity. Hippolytus, however, shows no such hostility. In *Ref.* 1.18 he describes Stoic theology by stating, “And they likewise supposed God to be the one originating principle of all things, being a body of the utmost refinement, and that His providential care pervaded everything.”

¹³ *Regula exigit ueritatis ut primo omnium credamus in Deum Patrem et Dominum omnipotentem, id est rerum omnium perfectissimum conditorem.*

¹⁴ *Trin.* 1.14.

¹⁵ *Trin.* 2.12 and 3.1.

¹⁶ *Trin.* 8.4.

¹⁷ See Apuleius’ *Dogm. Plat.* 1.18 and *De deo Socr.* 3 and 23; Cicero’s *Nat. d.* 2.83; 3.44; 3.67; and 3.72.

¹⁸ *Trin.* 3.1: Hunc igitur agnoscimus et scimus Deum, conditorem rerum omnium, Dominum propter potestatem, parentem propter institutionem.

¹⁹ *Trin.* 1 identifies God as the creator and then attributes the organization of creation as the means by which he takes care of and provides for mankind. Providing for mankind includes offering beautiful things to look at and offering man laws for his benefit. Through creation, man can immediately recognize beauty, goodness, and justice, which all reflect God’s nature.

prayers as Father (*Patrem*), instead of God (*Deo*).²⁰ For Novatian, God's activities through the Son and apostles provide the means by which man recognizes the Creator God as Father. By focusing on the activity of the Son's revelation, Novatian asserts a Christian justification for the longstanding philosophical tradition which identified the creator as Parent or Father.

In chapter 1, I discussed the references to the Maker and Father in Plato's *Timaeus* 28c and the importance they had on the philosophical tradition leading up to Novatian's time.²¹ In this tradition, the application of fatherhood to the Supreme Being was connected to the creation or ordering of the universe.²² Apuleius provides one of the many examples,

[Plato also says, that] there are three species of Gods; the first of which is that one and alone supreme (*prima unus et solus summus*) God, who is super-mundane and incorporeal, and whom we have above shown to be the father and architect (*patrem et architectum*) of this divine world. [*Dogm. Plat.* 1.11]²³

²⁰ *Trin.* 8.4: ut condicio generis humani agnosceret institutorem et, si sequi maluisset, haberet quem pro Deo in suis iam postulationibus Patrem diceret. DeSimone notes the influence of Matt. 6:9 and Luke 11:2, *On the Trinity*, 39 n. 14.

²¹ See also Hippolytus' *Ref.* 1.2 in which he notes that Pythagoras identified a father and a mother as the original cause of all things.

²² Alcinous' *Did.* 10.3 states, "He is Father through being the cause of all things and bestowing order on the heavenly Intellect and the soul of the world in accordance with himself and his own thoughts." Apuleius remarks, "But of the father of these, who is the lord and the author of all things...", *De deo Socr.* 3. Cf. Dunn who sees no connection between "fatherhood" and creative activity: "Although DeSimone heads his fifth chapter 'God the Father and Creation', his analysis of the first eight chapters of Novatian's *de Trinitate* has nothing to say about the Fatherhood of God. This is not surprising because it is not a topic which Novatian himself discussed in these chapters. The word *pater* occurs only five times while words like *conditor*, *auctor*, *institutor*, *artifex*, *parens* and *initiator* occur at least fourteen times, not to mention the verbs that refer to the creative activity of God," "Diversity and Unity," 390-391. Dunn misses the influences of the traditions which connected divine Fatherhood with creative activity, leading him to conclude, "It is hard therefore simply to make the assertion that the first eight chapters of the treatise are about God the Father; they are more about God the creator," *Ibid.*, 391. In his analysis, it appears that Dunn downplays the importance of Novatian's identification of God's Fatherhood because he is looking for Novatian to make a connection in light of Trinitarian concerns. I, however, think that Novatian draws out the Fatherhood of God in light of teachings regarding God as one, supreme, and unique.

²³ *Deorum trinas nuncupat species, quarum est, prima unus et solus summus ille, ultramundanus, incorporeus, quem patrem et architectum huius divini orbis superius ostendimus.*

Novatian accepts this tradition and Christianizes it, believing that humanity only fully recognizes the Creator as Father through the Son. The fact that God is *recognized* by humanity as Father does not mean that Novatian suggests that God's fatherhood began with creation.²⁴

The Supreme God Is One

As with the term *pater*, Novatian argues that identifying God as *unus* protects His simplicity and His inability to change. He also follows Christian and Academic traditions, endorsed by Apuleius and others, when he uses *unus* to affirm God's uniqueness.²⁵

Trin. 27.3 provides the only instance in which Novatian defines his understanding of the term *unus*, making the definition he offers an important element to my reading of Novatian's repeated labeling of the Father as *unus*. In *Trin.* 27, he explains the relationship between the Father and the Son when he exegetes John 10:30's declaration, "I and the Father are one" (*Ego et Pater unum sumus*). Novatian defines his use of the masculine and neuter versions of the word for "one," writing,

Furthermore, since He said "one" [*unum*], let the heretics realize that He did not say "one" [*unus*]. For "one" in the neuter gender denotes harmony of fellowship, not unity of person. He is said to be "one" [*unum*], and not "one" [*unus*], because there is no reference to number but to association of fellowship with another. [*Trin.* 27.3]²⁶

²⁴ In chapters 6 and 7, I discuss *Trin.* 31.3: "He [the Logos] is always in the Father, lest the Father be not always the Father."

²⁵ See above the quotation of *Dogm. Plat.* in which the Supreme God is *unus, solus, pater*, and *architectus*. Christian examples are numerous. One can look, for instance, to 1 Clement 46's identification of "one God and one Christ and the one Spirit of grace."

²⁶ Et quia dixit *unum*, intellegant haeretici quia non dixit 'unus'. Vnum enim neutraliter positum societatis concordiam, non unitatem personae sonat. Vnum enim, non 'unus' esse dicitur, quoniam nec ad numerum refertur, sed ad societatem alterius expromitur.

Novatian defines *unus* (m) as referring to an individual and *unum* (n) as referring to the common will or the fellowship among individuals. His argument comes from Tertullian's *Prax.*²⁷ Novatian's passage begins a section in which he defends calling Christ "God," while also justifying the identification of the Father as the *unus* God. Although he calls the Son "God," Novatian never calls the Son the "one God" nor does he clarify the content of the phrase "one God" with a Trinitarian explanation, which some of his sources had done.²⁸ Such a terminological distinction forms, in part, Novatian's basis for asserting a distinction between the attributes of the Father and those of the Son.

Three major factors contribute to Novatian's identification of the Father as the one (*unus*) God. First, Novatian appears to draw from the philosophical traditions which identified a single, supreme creator. Other philosophic traditions, besides the Platonic

²⁷ In *Prax.* 22, Tertullian writes concerning John 10:30: "Here then they wish to make a stand, these fools, yea blind, who see not, first, that 'I and the Father' is an indication of two; secondly, at the end <of the sentence>, that 'are' is not from the person of one, because it is, spoken in the plural; and then, that he says 'are one <thing>', not 'are one <person>'. For if he had said 'are one <person>' he would have been able to assist their case: for 'one <person>' is apparently an indication of the singular number. Yet when he says that two, of the masculine gender, are one <thing>, in the neuter-which is not concerned with singularity but with unity, with similitude, with conjunction, with the love of the Father who loveth the Son, and with the obedience of the Son who obeys the Father's will-when he says, *One <thing> are I and the Father*, he shows that those whom he equates and conjoins are two." See also *Noet.* 7.1 which uses John 10:30 to suggest that the divine unity must be set in the framework of two persons (*prosopa*) and one power (*dunamis*).

²⁸ *Noet.* affirms the distinction of divine persons, but uses the idea of oneness to describe the union of all three or as the ultimate power which reverts (logically at least) back to the Father. *Noet.* 14.4-6 states: "The Father gives orders, the Word performs the work, and is revealed as Son, through whom belief is accorded to the Father. By a harmonious economy the result is a single God. This is because there is one God. For the one who commands is the Father, the one who obeys is the Son, and the one who promotes mutual understandings is the Holy Spirit. He who is Father is over all things, and the Son is through all things, and the Holy Spirit is in all things. We can get no idea of the one God other than by really believing in the Father and Son and Holy Spirit." Papandrea briefly offers an interpretation of Novatian's thought, which makes it sound like Novatian shares an understanding similar to that found in *Noet.* He writes, "But since the Son's divinity is derived from, and therefore shared with, the Father, there is only one divine substance between the two, and therefore both the Father and the Son (indeed also the Spirit, who proceeds as well) together constitute one Divinity," *Trinitarian Theology*, 329-330. Dunn makes a similar mistake when he claims, "Novatian took for granted what he has inherited: a faith statement that records that there is Father, Son and Spirit who is the one God," "Diversity and Unity," 390. See also *Ibid.* 400. I am convinced that Novatian does not think about God as *unus* in any such way.

ones seen above, made similar claims about the divine oneness.²⁹ For example, Ps.-Aristotle's *Mund.* addresses the multiple names of the gods in addition to the Supreme God who preserves and creates all things.³⁰ He writes of the highest God, "Though he is one, he has many names, according to the many effects he himself produces."³¹ For this author, any culture's reference to a Supreme God must ultimately refer to the one, Supreme God, since there cannot be more than one Supreme Being.³²

The second factor contributing to Novatian's attribution of *unus* to the Supreme God came from the influence of Christian authors, such as Justin, Theophilus, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Tertullian (in addition to the Bible, of course). The affirmation of God as one is ubiquitous in these authors, and Scripture was often cited to justify the point. However, in the first eight chapters of *Trin.*, those which concern the Father specifically, Novatian does not use any scriptural passage to declare that the Father is the *unus Dei*.³³ He presents his views simply as logically irrefutable, based upon his theological and philosophical formulations.

²⁹ The claim about divine oneness and unity produced various and competing propositions concerning the nature and/or possibility of one and many. See for example Ps.-Aristotle's presentation of Eleatic philosophy in *On Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias*, including the following statement which Ps.-Aristotle later attacks, "But anything eternal must be infinite, because it has not a beginning from which its existence arose, nor any end into which it could ever terminate (for it is universal). Again, anything eternal must be a unity. For if it were two or more, these would terminate in each other," *On Melissus* 974a.

³⁰ *Mund.* 397b. *Mund.* represents a stoically influenced theology. Reydam-Schils notes, "Aristotle's Unmoved Mover does not 'care' for the universe," *Demiurge and Providence*, 200.

³¹ *Mund.* 401a.

³² Osborn presents a variety of the Christian responses to this philosophical tradition, in *Emergence of Christian Theology*, 109-118.

³³ Novatian does cite John 17:3 in *Trin.* 16.4 when discussing the divinity of the Son. There he seems to take for granted the distinction which he already established without the help of Scripture: "If Christ is only man, why did He lay down for us a rule to be believed when He said: 'Now this is everlasting life, that they may know Thee, the one and true God (*unum et uerum*), and Jesus Christ, whom Though hast sent?'"

Some scholars have attributed the influence of the old Roman creed on Novatian's affirmation of God as *unus*.³⁴ In light of the fact that Novatian organizes *Trin.* around an explanation of the Roman baptismal creed, such a theory appears at first sight promising.³⁵ However, J. N. D. Kelly puts to rest the speculation about the Roman creed's containment of *unus* during the first few centuries, since no evidence exists to support this assertion.³⁶ Novatian's use of the term demonstrates that he believed it expressed a necessary concept of theology. Kelly concedes the basis of this point, writing, "The Roman creed implies and is based upon the belief in one God, but the belief is not asserted in so many words."³⁷ The identification of God as *unus* was certainly a part of Novatian's understanding of the *regula*, even if it was not explicitly found in it.

The third factor leading to Novatian's emphasis on the term *unus* involves the polemical nature of *Trin.* Novatian attacks several theological traditions which preached God's oneness while denying any distinction between the Father and Son (and Holy Spirit). One such tradition included Sabellianism, a primary polemical target of *Trin.* Sabellians employed scriptural statements about God as *unus* to claim that the names Father and the Son merely describe a distinction in the activity of a single being referred to as God.³⁸ Like Tertullian and Hippolytus, Novatian argues from the personal distinction of the Father and Son:

³⁴ Fausset proposed that the creed might have already begun with a statement of belief in one (*unus*) God, although the inclusion of this term at this early period is debatable. See Fausset, *Novatiani Romanae*, xxvi-xxvii and 28 n. 6. He also briefly outlines some of the various scholarly positions on this subject which developed in the 19th century.

³⁵ As noted in the Introduction, the original title might have been *De regula veritatis* or *De regula fidei*. See DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 49 and Dunn, "Diversity and Unity," 390.

³⁶ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longmans, 1960), 132.

³⁷ *Idem*.

³⁸ Epiphanius writes of the Sabellians, "[Sabellius] and the Sabellians who derive from him teach that he who is the Father is the same one who is the Son and the same one who is the Holy Spirit, so that there are three names in one hypostasis," *Panarion* 62.4.

Therefore, that all heretical calumny against our Faith may cease, it is right that we should discuss the fact the Christ is also God (in such a way that it will not interfere with the truth of Scripture or with our faith) because the Scriptures assert and because we maintain and believe that there is only one God. [*Trin.* 30.2]³⁹

As is the case throughout *Trin.*, Novatian argues that Christ is God, but he retains the classification of the Father as the one God.⁴⁰

Other instances of Novatian distinguishing the Father from the Son add further clarification to what Novatian means when he calls the Father the *unus Dei*. In *Trin.* 31, he states, “There is, then, God the Father, the Founder and Creator of all things, who alone is without origin, invisible, immense, immortal, eternal, the one God.”⁴¹ *Pater* and *unus* identify the subject, who is the Supreme God possessing all of the other attributes named.⁴² Novatian argues throughout *Trin.* that the one God is the Father who must

³⁹ Merito a nobis, ut omnis a fide nostra auferri possit haeretica calumnia, de eo quod et Deus sit Christus sic est disputandum, ut non impediat scripturae ueritatem, sed nec nostram fidem, qua unus Deus et per scripturas promittitur et a nobis tenetur et creditur.

⁴⁰ See also *Trin.* 31. 5 in which Novatian calls the Son the second person (*secundam personam*) after God the Father who is *unus*.

⁴¹ *Trin.* 31.1: Est ergo Deus Pater omnium institutor et creator, solus originem nesciens, inuisibilis, immensus, immortalis, aeternus, unus Deus. While the word *solus* appears in this case to modify “origin,” the next portion of *Trin.* 31.1 includes Novatian’s typical statement that the Father’s attributes must be considered unique. He writes, “Nothing whatever, I will not say can be preferred, but can even be compared to His greatness, His majesty, and His power.” *Trin.* 31.1 also shares some similarities with 1 Tim. 1:17: Now to the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (*Regi autem saeculorum immortali invisibili soli Deo honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum amen.*) There are clearly more theological themes at work in *Trin.* 31.1 for it to be simply a decorated version of 1 Tim. 1:17.

⁴² For instance, Papandrea states, “Novatian can hold in tension the divinity of Christ and the oneness of God by maintaining that only the Father is the one God, while the Son is God in a derivative sense, since His authority, His divinity, and indeed His very existence are derived from the Father as His source,” *Trinitarian Theology*, 263; see also 261-262 and 329-336. Although I think the above statement is accurate, I disagree with his later conclusion that Novatian must also be speaking about full and equal divinity of the Father and Son with the difference found only in the Father as “source.” The Father is certainly the source of the Son’s divinity, but Novatian’s logic behind emphasizing the Father as the one God undercuts Papandrea’s reading. Furthermore, Novatian’s use of “Father” and “one” play the same role as they do in *Trin.* 30.2, which I quote above. Papandrea’s error, which is shared by Dunn (see “Diversity and Unity,” 404), has to do with using the phrase “oneness of God.” These scholars use it in such a way as to suggest Trinitarian implications. The better phrase to describe the issues which Papandrea, Dunn, and others address is “unity of divinity.” Novatian asserts that the Son shares the Father’s divinity, but he, unlike some of his scholarly interpreters, never confuses this topic with the Trinitarian “oneness of God” seen in Tertullian and *Noet*. See the sections in chapter 5 on Hippolytus and Tertullian for a discussion of the Trinitarian phraseology related to God’s oneness.

uniquely be seen as alone without origin, invisible, immense, immortal, and eternal. By calling God *unus* in *Trin.* 31, Novatian relies on his earlier insistence that the term indicates numerical singularity, which for him means the Father. Additionally we see that a constellation of unique attributes are assumed when he makes reference to the one God.

Trin. 9 also starts with a statement proclaiming Novatian's *regula*.⁴³ This chapter begins his treatment of the Son after eight chapters devoted to the Father. He writes,

The same Rule of Truth teaches us, after we believe in the Father, to believe also in the Son of God, Christ Jesus, the Lord Our God, nevertheless the Son of God. We are to believe in the Son of this God who is the one and only (*unus et solus*) God; namely, the Creator of all things, as has already been set forth above. [*Trin.* 9.1]⁴⁴

Novatian refers to the Father with the terms *unus* and *solus* as well as by the designation of the Father as Creator (*conditor*).⁴⁵ Elsewhere in *Trin.*, Novatian quotes Isaiah 37:20 which uses the term *solus* within a set of texts meant to proclaim the one God.⁴⁶ It is arguable that *unus* and *solus* reflect synonymous usage in 9.1. They identify the single subject, the Father, and they imply or contain the attributes which Novatian applies to the Supreme God's nature. These attributes include invisibility, immensity, immortality, and eternity. By designating the Father alone as *unus et solus*, Novatian confirms that the

⁴³ See also *Trin.* 31.20: "Hence one God (*unus Deus*) is demonstrated, the true and eternal Father (*verus et aeternus Pater*), from whom alone this power of the Godhead is sent forth, transmitted and directed to the Son, and is returned again, by a communion of substance, to the Father."

⁴⁴ *Eadem regula ueritatis docet nos credere post Patrem etiam in Filium Dei Christum Iesum Dominum Deum nostrum, sed Dei Filium, huius Dei qui et unus et solus est, conditor scilicet rerum omnium, ut iam et superius expressum est.* In this passage we also see the particular manner by which Novatian connects *Deus* with *Pater*, *unus*, and *solus*.

⁴⁵ In *Trin.* 31.1 Novatian identifies the Father as "*institutor et creator*."

⁴⁶ *Trin.* 30.12: "And Hezekiah says: 'That all men may know that you alone are God.'" (*Et Ezechias: ut sciant omnes quia tu es Deus solus.*) A version of this also can be found in 2 Kings 19:19. I am unaware of these passages being used in early Christian literature to make the point about the one God as Novatian does in *Trin.* 30.12

Father possesses all of the attributes he assigns to Him in a uniquely superlative way.

They establish the Father's singularity.⁴⁷

I conclude this section by identifying Tertullian's *Herm.* as a fundamental literary source influencing Novatian's presentation of the Father as one and unique. Although some scholars point to *Herm.* as important for Novatian's work, none have looked very closely at many of the important textual parallels.⁴⁸ Tertullian's work arose as a response to Hermogenes' acceptance of the typical Academic position on the eternity of matter.⁴⁹ Hermogenes differed from the growing Christian consensus on the doctrine of God as the creator *ex nihilo*.⁵⁰ While some Middle Platonists, including Apuleius,⁵¹ believed that the world had a beginning, this position was not based on God as the creator from nothing, but rather on God as the creator who used eternally existing, undefined matter. This is the position with which Hermogenes agreed.

In response to Hermogenes' teachings,⁵² Tertullian argues that the one God's attributes must be unique. Hermogenes contends that God and matter must both be

⁴⁷ See *Trin.* 31.6-19 and my treatment of these passages in chapter 7 in the section "Inequality of the Father and the Son."

⁴⁸ The following analysis serves as an example of my larger argument that Novatian's theology of the Father derives more so from themes found in *Herm.* rather than in *Prax.* In this case, Tertullian's emphasis on the Father as one in *Herm.* can be contrasted with his use of *unus* in reference to the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in *Prax.* 2. We see a similar idea of divine unity in *Noet.* 14.5-6 as that found in *Prax.* Novatian avoids the suggestion found in *Prax.* and *Noet.* and relies on the association of *unus* exclusively with the Father.

⁴⁹ See J. H. Waszink, *The Treatise Against Hermogenes*, 3-13 for a brief presentation of Hermogenes' biography along with his major theological concerns.

⁵⁰ N. Joseph Torchia, "Theories of Creation in the Second Century Apologists and their Middle Platonic Background," *StPatr* 26 (1993): 192-99.

⁵¹ *Dogm. Plat.* 1.8.

⁵² Waszink's Introduction to his translation of *Herm.* provides a discussion about the probable influence which Theophilus' *Against the Heresy of Hermogenes* had on Tertullian's theology and scriptural citations. See Waszink, *Treatise Against Hermogenes*, 9-13. The following description comes from *Herm.* 2: according to Tertullian, Hermogenes claims that God made all things either 1) out of Himself, 2) out of nothing, or 3) out of something. Hermogenes rejects the first because it would entail the necessity of God being dissoluble into parts. This cannot be God since He is indivisible, unchangeable, and always the same. *Timaeus* 28a, for example, discusses the Forms as always having being, without regard to becoming, and also as never changing. Hermogenes rebuffs the second proposition with the argument based on the

eternal, but that matter is still somehow inferior to God. Tertullian dismisses Hermogenes' thinking, saying that the possession of the divine attributes makes the suggestion of matter's inferiority impossible.⁵³ Tertullian writes,

But God must be One (*unum*), because that is God which is supreme (*sumum*); but nothing can be supreme save that which is unique (*unicum*); but nothing can be unique if something can be put on a level with it (*aliquid adaequabitur*); but matter will be put on a level with God, when it is authoritatively declared to be eternal (*aeterna*). [*Herm.* 4.6]⁵⁴

Just before this passage, Tertullian offers a shortened form of 1 Cor. 8:5-6 which acknowledges that some beings are called gods, but these are not to be confused with the one Father.⁵⁵ Tertullian emphasizes the sharing of divine attributes with the recognition that divine names or attributes come by grace and not by nature.⁵⁶ This logic controls Tertullian's understanding of how divine names and attributes can be used of various subjects, such as the Father, Son, angels, and human beings.⁵⁷ The plurality of beings sharing in divine attributes is not what Tertullian condemns; he condemns the possibility that two beings could simultaneously, independently, and equally possess the attributes of the Supreme God. As will be seen in the Word Christologies in the next chapter, the

idea that a very good God could not have created *ex nihilo*. Had such a good God created *ex nihilo* then all things created out of nothing and in accordance with God's very good will would likewise have to be very good in all ways. Any encounter with the world defies such a thought, according to Hermogenes. Therefore, concludes Hermogenes, God must have created out of something.

⁵³ *Herm.* 7.1.

⁵⁴ Deum autem unum esse oportet, quia quod sumum sit deus est; sumum autem non erit nisi quod unicum fuerit; unicum autem esse non poterit cui aliquid adaequabitur; adaequabitur autem deo materia cum aeterna censetur.

⁵⁵ *Herm.* 4.3: "For though there be that are called gods in name, whether in heaven or in earth, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things" (Nam etsi sunt qui dicuntur dii siue in caelo siue in terra nomine, ceterum nobis unus deus pater ex quo omnia). Tertullian leaves out the reference to Jesus Christ in 1 Cor. 8:6 because his purpose is to secure the uniqueness of the Father.

⁵⁶ *Herm.* 5.3-4.

⁵⁷ See *Prax.* 13 in which Tertullian argues that the Son and Spirit can rightly be called God and Lord. His qualification is that if the Son and the Father are mentioned together, God must refer to the Father and Lord to the Son so as to give no impression that he is speaking about two gods. The Father deserves the name God uniquely.

possibility of God bringing forth or making other gods is common, and Tertullian provides an applicable structure for making such claims.

Novatian follows the content of Tertullian's argument:

And so God is said to be one (*unus*) since he has not equal (*parem non habet*). For God (whatever that Being may be that is God) must necessarily be supreme (*summum*). Now whatever is supreme must be supreme in such wise that an equal (*comparem*) is excluded. Therefore He must be the one and only (*solum et unum*) Being with whom nothing can be compared, because He has no equal (*dum parem non habet*). [*Trin.* 4.8, modified slightly]⁵⁸

The parallels with Tertullian's passage in *Herm.* are clear, although the terminology is not uniform.⁵⁹ Both authors begin by declaring God to be *unus*. Novatian uses the phrase *parem non habet* as well as the term *comparem* to account for Tertullian's connection between God as unique (*unicum*) and as having no equal (*adaequabitur*). Novatian never uses the term *unicum*, but his classification of God as *solus* acts as a synonym. For both men, the one God must also be described as Supreme (*summum*). Tertullian attaches eternity to his portrait of God's unique attributes in this passage while Novatian waits until he has first declared God to be alone in infinity.⁶⁰

The importance of Novatian's dependence on *Herm.* is critical to my reading of Novatian's subordinationist theology of the Son. In *Herm.*, Tertullian is unconcerned with articulating a theology which includes a robust theology of the Son.⁶¹ What we find

⁵⁸ Ideo et unus pronuntiatus est, dum parem non habet. Deus enim, quicquid esse potest quod Deus est, summum sit necesse est. Summum autem quicquid est, ita demum summum esse oportet, dum extra comparem est. Et ideo solum et unum sit necesse est, cui conferri nihil potest, dum parem non habet. See also *Trin.* 31.18 and Mattei's comments in "De Trinitate 31," 220-222 on the Son's equality with the Father in regard to *Trin.* 31.18-22.

⁵⁹ The only significant difference between the two passages is Novatian's insistence on adding a reference to his negative theology: *quicquid esse potest quod Deus est*. As noted in chapter 2, Tertullian's naming of God's nature as spirit was neither lost on, nor condoned by Novatian. In this case, Novatian breaks his flow of repeating Tertullian's argument by inserting a rebuke to the part of it with which he disagreed.

⁶⁰ *Trin.* 4.9-12.

⁶¹ Only in *Herm.* 8 does Tertullian mention the Son. There, however, Tertullian does so to point out that the Son must be greater than the matter which Hermogenes claims is eternal.

in *Herm.* is an emphasis on the uniqueness, simplicity, and transcendence of the Father. Novatian appears to have used *Herm.* to shape his own theology of the Father. As will be seen in chapters 6 and 7, the upshot of this influence is Novatian's understanding of the Son in light of the Father's supremacy. I will show that Novatian fully embraces the singularity and uniqueness of the Father in order to articulate a Word Christology based on a distinction in attributes between the Son and the Father.

Aeternus: Time as Dependent on Beginning and End

Novatian applies the term *aeternus* (and in some cases the cognate *aeternitatis*) to the Father, Son, Holy Spirit, life for man in the Garden of Eden, man's future state of life, and the bread which is Christ. His use resembles the theological philosophy with which he was familiar. Stoics, Epicureans, Aristotelians, Academics, "Gnostics," Jews, and Christians accepted *aeternus* as a divine attribute or as descriptive of the result of contact with the divine. In this section, my comments will be directed towards the relationship between time, beginning, and end. In the next section, I will broaden my analysis of Novatian's understanding of *aeternus* in light of the literary influences presented below.

The idea that God exists entirely and strictly outside of linear progression was not the predominant understanding of *aeternus*' meaning before or during Novatian's time.⁶²

⁶² Modern scholarship offers mixed conclusions about the ancient understandings of the Platonic doctrines of time and eternity. One approach to interpreting Plato's understanding of eternity, time, and everlasting time includes the conclusion that he contrasted time from eternity to the point that eternity stands entirely apart from and outside of time. Conversely, Aristotle held to the belief that eternity refers to eternal, progressive duration. For this view, see William Kneale's, "Time and Eternity in Theology," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 61 (1960-61): 101-107. The analysis with which I agree views the Platonic distinction between time and eternity as far less pronounced. For this argument, see W. von Leyden's, "Time, Number, and Eternity in Plato and Aristotle," *Philosophical Quarterly* 14:54 (Jan., 1964): 35-52 and also Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*. Translated by Floyd V. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 61-68. Cullman's work includes the conclusion that the early Christians understood eternity as that time "is possible only as an attribute of

In many instances, *aeternus* refers to infinite temporal progression in the past and future.⁶³ The philosophical schools treated the subject of time differently, and I will address this issue again in regard to the generation of the Son. I take note of Cicero's Epicurean speaker who offers an example of one ancient approach to the concepts.⁶⁴ Velleius states, "One cannot measure [eternity from the boundless past] by any definite period of time, but one can understand what it must have been in extent, for one cannot even envisage that there may have been a time when no time existed."⁶⁵ In fact, a version of proposing a time when there was no time may have been the position of some Stoics, and this theory also seems to have involved temporal progression of some sort apart from the specific or technical understanding of time.⁶⁶ Therefore, for some Stoics, "time"

God...or, to put it better, what we call 'time' is nothing but a part, defined and delimited by God, of this same unending duration of God's time," 62.

⁶³ See Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation and the Continuum: Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 98-130 for a discussion of numerous, ancient texts.

⁶⁴ I identify Cicero's work for its value both as a literary source for Novatian and also as a witness to a relatively universalistic understanding of divinity's description. The range of themes seen in the shared positions of the Epicurean, Academic, and Stoic include a rejection of a beginning, birth, or end, as well as the rejection that the divine can change, break down, or succumb to mortality. Tertullian's *Herm.* also includes a similar set of arguments and terminology.

⁶⁵ *Nat. d.* 1.21: [Sed fuit quaedam ab infinito tempore aeternitas,] quam nulla circumscriptio temporum metiebatur, spatio tamen qualis ea fuerit intellegi potest, quod ne in cogitationem quidem cadit, ut fuerit tempus aliquod, nullum cum tempus esset). Walsh comments, "Velleius argues that we can comprehend the notion of eternity before creation by thinking of it as a spatial extension back from the moment of creation," *Nature of the Gods*, 151 n. 21.

⁶⁶ John Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 274-280. Rist suggests that some Stoics (Chrysippus in particular) may have spoken about time as specifically related to the beginning and end of the world. In that case, and similar to the thinking of Cicero's Velleius, temporal progression would have occurred prior to the beginning time. Cicero's Stoic, Balbus, speaks about the eternal progression of time through the allegorical interpretation of the traditional gods in *Nat. d.* 2.64. D. M. Schenkeveld presents the Stoic understanding of time in light of the Stoic understanding of the temporal continuum. He writes, "To the Stoics time is an incorporeal continuum which can be infinitely divided. For this reason no time is wholly present inasmuch as the present consists of a part of the past and a part of the future. Past and future are parts of time and stretch out infinitely on one side but are limited by the present, which acts as a kind of joining," "Language," in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, Eds. Algra, Keimpe, Jonathan Barnes, Jaap Mansfeld, Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 191. Rist and Schenkeveld's presentations do not harmonize easily. Either Schenkeveld is identifying Stoics (other than Chrysippus and those who followed him) or "infinitely" must be taken as really referring to ending at either the past or future occurrence of a conflagration.

itself is a technical term related to the movements of the world;⁶⁷ speaking of time as related to the movements of the world did not negate divine temporal progression apart from those movements. Temporal progression, therefore, may have included a pre-*tempus* progression and a progression of *tempus*, strictly speaking.⁶⁸ In both instances, what we think of as temporal progression is assumed and maintained.

Apuleius also presents Plato's doctrines in a way similar to Velleius' position, namely in light of eternal, temporal progression. Apuleius writes, "Plato thought these Gods to be incorporeal and animated natures, without any end or beginning, but eternal both with reference to the time past and the time to come."⁶⁹ At the very least, we have ancient examples which prove that Epicureans, Middle Platonists, and Stoics (as well as Aristotelians) agreed that temporal progression is associated with eternity, as long as a beginning or end point in time is somehow explicitly rejected.⁷⁰

Furthermore, the logical presumption that any thing with a beginning necessitated that it also must have an end was almost universally held by philosophers.⁷¹ Conversely,

⁶⁷ Stobaeus claimed, for example, that "Chrysippus said time is the dimension of motion according to which the measure of speed and slowness is spoken of ; or the dimension accompanying the world's motion," quoted in Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers* 1, 304.

⁶⁸ Chrysippus' position does not negate this possibility, and neither does Zeno's. Simplicius wrote, "Of the Stoics, Zeno said time is the dimension of all motion without qualification, but Chrysippus said it is the dimension of the world's motion," quoted in Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers* 1, 304.

⁶⁹ *De deo Socr.* 3: Quos deos Plato existimat naturas incorporalis, animalis, neque fine ullo neque exordio, sed prorsus ac retro aeviternas. *Aeviternus* is an old form of *aeternus* and this passage is the only one in which Apuleius uses this spelling. In all others, he chooses *aeternus*.

⁷⁰ Daniélou treats the emphasis on "beginning" as having its primary origin within Middle Platonism, *Gospel Message*, 328-330.

⁷¹ The well known modification of this principle was the Academic notion that the divine had the power to bring some things (like the world and souls) into existence and also the power to keep them in everlasting existence. See Walsh's comment in his edition of *Nat. d.*, 151 n. 20, in which he identifies the assertion that everything with a beginning has an end: "Velleius's logic is strong; it can be met only by Plato's claim (*Timeaus* 32c) that the creation is made eternal by the will of the Creator." Hippolytus notes this teaching as a major tenet of Plato's doctrine in *Ref.* 1.16. Novatian makes the same argument in *Trin.* 2.1 when he states, "[God] binds together the discordant materials of all the elements into such harmony that out of these dissimilar elements, there exists a unique world so compacted by this consolidated harmony that no force can dissolve it, save when He alone who created it orders it to be dissolved in order

it was held that a thing which had no beginning could have no end. For example, Velleius states, “Can you suppose that a man can have even dipped into natural philosophy if he imagines that anything that has come into being can be eternal? (*aeternum*)...What thing is there that has a beginning (*principium*) but not an end (*extremum*)?”⁷² The Epicurean presents the consensus view of the philosophic schools. All of Cicero’s speakers rely on the aphorism: that which begins must end. The idea was ubiquitous in Roman writing, and versions of it can be found in such authors as Quintillian⁷³ and Seneca.⁷⁴

Tertullian provides another example regarding the same aphorism. He writes,

For what other essential property of God is there than eternity (*aeternitas*)? What other essence has eternity (*aeternitatis*) than ever to have existed and to go on existing forever because of its privilege of being without a beginning (*initii*) and without an end (*finis*)?⁷⁵ If this is the special property of God, it must belong to God alone, since it is His special property—for clearly if it should be assigned to

to grant us greater blessings.” (in concordiam elementorum omnium discordantes materias sic connectens, ut ex disparibus elementis ita sit unus mundus ista coagmentata conspiratione solidatus, ut nulla ui dissolui possit, nisi cum ilium solus ipse qui fecit ad maiora alia praestanda nobis solui iusserit.)

⁷² *Nat. d.* 1.20: Hunc censes primis ut dicitur labris gustasse physiologiam, ed est naturae rationem, qui quicquam quod ortum sit putet aeternum esse posse?...aut quid est cui principium aliquod sit, nihil sit extremum.

⁷³ Quintilian, *Institutione oratoria* (5.10.79): “Arguments which prove the same thing from opposites are also mutually *consequential*; for instance, we may argue that he who says that the world was created thereby implies that it is suffering decay, since this is the property of all created things.” (Est invicem consequens et quod ex diversis idem ostendit; ut, qui mundum nasi decit, per hoc ipsum et deficere significet, quia deficit omne quod nascitur.”)

⁷⁴ Seneca, *Ad Polybium de consolatione* (1): “Whatever begins also ends.” (Quicquid coepit et desinit.) In *Ref.* 1.1., Hippolytus identifies Thales as the originator of the connection made between divinity and the lack of a beginning and end.

⁷⁵ Tertullian uses an array of terms throughout *Herm.* for the concepts of “beginning” and “end.” Tertullian’s *initio* and *fine* reflect synonymous usage as Velleius’ *principium* and *extremum*. In *Herm.* 3.7, Tertullian uses *originem* to express the same idea of *initio* (beginning). But Tertullian’s application of *principium* is reserved for a specific discussion of its exegetical significance regarding Genesis 1.1. He extensively treats this verse in order to eliminate any suggestion that *in principio*, from his Latin translation of Genesis 1.1, could possibly stand Hermogenes’ interpretation of God’s use of eternal matter in the world’s creation. In that case, argues Tertullian, the text of Genesis would begin *ex principio* (see *Herm.* 19-21). For Tertullian, the synonyms *initio* and *originem* seem to function based on the authority and usage of Genesis’ *principio*. Tertullian remains clearly within the boundaries seen established in Roman philosophy, yet he organizes the language to best suit Christian thought and Scripture.

some other being as well, it will no longer be the special property of God, but a property shared with that being to which it is also assigned. [*Herm.* 4.1-2]⁷⁶

Tertullian's point is clear, God's eternity, which excludes a beginning or an end, must be a unique attribute by definition of divinity. Tertullian's logic regarding the singularity of divine attributes as noted in the prior section applies in this case as well; for Tertullian, the attribute of eternity must be held by the Supreme God alone.

Tertullian, however, offers a teaching more complex than the simple link between eternity and a lack of a beginning and end. He also suggests that God not only does not have time but that divinity is all time. Tertullian writes,

Eternity (*aeternitatis*) has no time (*tempus*), for itself is the whole of time (*Omne enim tempus ipsa est*): it cannot be affected by that which it causes to be: that which cannot have birth is exempt from age. If a god is old, he will have to come to an end: if he is new, he once was not. Newness gives evidence of a beginning: oldness holds the threat of an ending. But God is as much a stranger to beginning and ending as he is to time, which is the judge and divider of the beginning and of the ending. [*Marc.* 1.8]⁷⁷

The passage is difficult to interpret since *tempus* could be used technically to refer to cosmic movements without negating the idea of divine temporal progression.⁷⁸ On the one hand, this was a Stoic position with which Tertullian would have been familiar. On the other hand, the statement that "eternity has not time" may indicate sympathies for a Platonically influenced position of divine atemporality, mentioned above. With the statement that eternity "is itself all time," I think it unlikely that Tertullian is expressing

⁷⁶ Quis enim alius dei census quam aeternitas? Quis alius aeternitatis status quam semper fuisse et futurum esse ex praerogativa nullius initii et nullius finis? Hoc si dei est proprium, solius dei erit, cuius est proprium, *scilicet* quia et si alii adscribatur, iam non erit dei proprium sed commune cum eo cui et adscribitur.

⁷⁷ Non habet tempus aeternitas. Omne enim tempus ipsa est. Quod facit, pati non potest. Caret aetate quod non licet nasci. Deus si est vetus, non erit; si est novus, non fuit. Novitas initium testifictur, vetustas finem comminatur. Deus autem tam alienus ab initio et fine est quam a tempore, arbitro et metatore initii et finis.

⁷⁸ Fredouille, for example, treats Tertullian's approach as a mixture of the biblical view of duration without beginning or end and the Platonic notion of divine atemporality, in *Tertullien*, 282-3.

an adherence to Platonic atemporality. If he believes that eternity is all time, then Tertullian appears to be emphasizing divine containment of time, rather than an absolute divine separation from time (if that is how Plato is to be understood).

Novatian also takes up the argument that God's unique eternal status is equal to a lack of beginning and end. However, some references to time (*tempus*) set him apart from Cicero's speakers and more clearly in dependence of Tertullian. He identifies the Father as eternal, not only by claiming that God has neither beginning nor end, but by concluding from this that God lacks time.⁷⁹ According to Novatian, God is, "ever eternal (*semper aeternus*), because nothing is more ancient than He. In fact, that which is without a beginning (*origine*) can be preceded (*praecedi*) by nothing, because it lacks time (*dum non habet tempus*)."⁸⁰ Novatian identifies the applicability of time (*tempus*) only to those things which have a beginning (*origine*).⁸¹ His justification for denying the Father's contact with time derives from his position that the Father cannot have an beginning (*origo*).⁸²

Novatian continues *Trin.* 2.3 by stating,

⁷⁹ Novatian also identifies the Son as being given the divine name without reference to time (*Trin.* 20.8) and also that the Son is before all time (*Trin.* 31.3). These references to time include the Son's birth or beginning and therefore must be treated somewhat differently than the strict association Novatian makes between the lack of a beginning and therefore the lack of a relationship to time as it concerns the Father.

⁸⁰ *Trin.* 2.3: *semper aeternus, quia nihil illo antiquius. Id enim quod sine origine est, praecedi a nullo potest, dum non habet tempus.* Because Novatian also uses *aeternus* to mean "everlasting" (*Trin.* 1.2, 8.2, 9.7, 15.7, 15.9, 16.1, 16.4, 26.17, 29.7, 29.16), I take his modifier *semper*, in this case, to indicate that he intends *aeternus* not only as eternal, but in a superlative sense.

⁸¹ The passage from Cicero's *Nat. d.* 1.21 noted above suggests something different. Tertullian shows little interest in *tempus* throughout either *Prax.* or *Herm.* Also, as seen in the passages quoted from Tertullian and Cicero, Novatian accepted a handful of synonyms to express a beginning, including *principium*, *originem* and *initium*.

⁸² In *Trin.* 2.2, Novatian states, "For indeed He who has no beginning (*originem*) whatsoever, must necessarily experience no end (*exitum*); unless—far be the thought from us—He began to exist at a certain time (*aliquando*) and is therefore not above all things." In this example, *aliquando* stands in for *tempus*.

Therefore He is immortal (*immortalis*), for He does not pass away to a consummate end (*exitu*).⁸³ And since whatever is without a beginning (*origine*) is without a law (*lege*), He excludes the restrictions of time (*modum temporis*) because He feels Himself a debtor (*debitorem*) to no one. [*Trin.* 2.3]⁸⁴

Although Novatian begins *Trin.* 2.3 claiming that God's lack of a beginning means that He lacks time (*tempus*), the second half of the passage recasts God's lack of a beginning and end in terms of God's exclusion from the restrictions of time (*modus temporis*).⁸⁵ Tertullian does not use the term *debitor* in *Herm.*, but he attacks Hermogenes with the claim that Hermogenes makes God a servant to, or less than, matter. Both Tertullian and Novatian separate God from time without fully clarifying their philosophical influences. Since Novatian associates time (*tempus*) with things that begin, I am arguing that we should read Novatian as holding to the idea of the Father's eternal progression apart from *tempus*, without suggesting a strict atemporality. Novatian in this way treats *tempus* as having a technical meaning without discounting the Father's eternal temporal progression.

For Tertullian and Novatian, supremacy and power ultimately stand behind the relationship of the divine to creation and time.⁸⁶ Novatian states, "But if He began to exist after something else, He would be inferior to that previously existing thing; hence He would be found to be of lesser power (*minor potestate*), since designated as

⁸³ Novatian uses *originem* and *principium* in reference to time. He also uses *initio* and *terminus* as synonyms for these terms, respectively.

⁸⁴ Ideo immortalis, non deficiens in consummationis exitu. Et quoniam sine lege est quicquid sine origine est, modum temporis excludit, dum se debitorem nemini sentit.

⁸⁵ Novatian's inclusion of the idea that the Father's lack of a beginning excludes him from the law (*leges*) of a beginning is given another articulation in *Trin.* 6.9: "Those things which are not composite cannot experience this; for what is immortal, whatever it is, must be one, simple, and eternal. Since it is one, it cannot be dissolved because it lies outside the law (*ius*) of dissolution, and it is not subject to the law (*legibus*) of death." The terms Novatian associates with laws all include the sense of dependency and causality within the natural order, and they are all based on the idea that anything with a beginning or birth must be subject to laws of change.

⁸⁶ See for example *Herm.* 9 in which Tertullian argues that Hermogenes makes God weak because God lacks the power (*potestas*) to create from Himself. See also *Herm.* 14.2 and 19.5.

subsequent even in time itself.”⁸⁷ Novatian’s comments consist of two aspects. First, since the Father lacks a beginning, Novatian excludes Him from his understanding of time. Second, Novatian’s understanding of time depends on the idea of a progression of causes so that a first cause can (and must) be established. According to Novatian’s statements, ancientness of beginning corresponds to power (*potestas*). Novatian also removes the Supreme God from association with a beginning and an end, or what he refers to as time’s law (*leges*) and the restrictions of time (*modum temporis*). His exclusion of God the Father from time is the manner by which he safeguards the Father’s uniqueness and power, yet Novatian also appears to acknowledge some sense of temporal progression related to the Father’s eternality.

Aeternus and Aeternitatis: Immortality and Incorruptibility

The previous section demonstrated that Novatian defined time (*tempus*) as dependent on a beginning (*originem*). Since the Father lacks a beginning, He is eternal (*aeternus*). In this section, I will present other significant terms and concepts associated with eternity, beginning with Novatian’s sources.

In *Nat. d.* 1.45, Velleius, Cicero’s Epicurean, says that the gods are eternal and blessed (*beatum aeternumque*). He immediately ties eternity (*aeternus*) to immortality (*inmortalitas*). His explanation of *inmortalitas* is based on the idea that the gods neither become angered nor cause trouble for others. Velleius uses *inmortalitas* to identify the gods as not changing and thus not interactive.

⁸⁷ *Trin.* 2.2: sed dum post aliquid esse coeperit, infra id sit quod ante ipsum fuerit, minor inuentus potestate, dum posterior denotatur etiam ipso tempore.

The Epicurean next equates having a beginning (*ortus*) to mortality (*mortalitas*).⁸⁸ In response, Cotta the Academic accepts the connection made between a beginning and mortality. Up to this point in Cicero's dialogue, references to a beginning are undefined and therefore include both animate and inanimate things.⁸⁹ Cotta follows Velleius' lead and develops Velleius' language by specifying a beginning as "birth" (*natus*).⁹⁰ By doing so, he glosses the idea of a beginning to specifically animate things. All of the dialogue's speakers accept the proposition that a beginning and end, of both inanimate and animate things, is inconsistent with divinity. All speakers likewise accept the conversation's development which rejects any association between divinity's eternality and the concepts of birth and death.

The Academic's primary criticism of the Epicurean position rests on the latter's supposition that the gods had bodies composed of atoms. If the gods have bodies made of parts, argues the Academic, then the gods are not simple and they can and must break down. Gods who possess a bodily frame therefore cannot be immortal (*immortalitate*).⁹¹ As with Christian authors, however, the Academic shares the same eagerness as the Epicurean in assuming and maintaining the necessity of the gods' immortality or their unchanging quality. In Cicero, *immortalitas* refers to something which lacks an end and also something which does not change.

Like Cicero, Tertullian accepts 1) the position that any reference to a beginning negates the possibility of eternality and 2) the notion that an eternal being cannot change.

⁸⁸ "(Just as if) anything that has had a beginning must not necessarily be mortal." [aut non omne quod ortum sit mortalitas consequatur (Loeb 1.26).]

⁸⁹ Cicero's interlocutors use *ortus* and *principium* synonymously throughout *Nat. d.*

⁹⁰ *Nat. d.* 1.90.

⁹¹ At root in this criticism is the Epicurean belief in the gods as composed of atoms—a belief ridiculed by all the other schools as violating the premise of divine simplicity.

In regard to the first position, Tertullian attacks Hermogenes' suggestion that the "depths," referred to in Prov. 8:24, could be considered a form of eternal matter. He writes,

You have Wisdom saying, *And before the depths was I begotten*, that you may believe that the depth, too, was begotten, that is, made (for we also 'make' sons, though we 'beget them'). It makes no difference whether the depth was made or born, provided it is accorded a beginning, which could not be the case if the depth were incorporated in matter. [*Herm.* 32.2]⁹²

In this passage, Tertullian argues against Hermogenes' belief in the eternity of matter and the fact that Hermogenes interprets "depth" as "matter." Tertullian's point is that Hermogenes must deny the eternity of "depth," because the quotation from Prov. 8:24 implies that "depth" had a beginning. Any beginning, whether it is associated with making (*factum*) or birth (*natus*), negates the definition of eternity to which Hermogenes and Tertullian both adhere.

Tertullian also accepts the proposition that an eternal being or thing cannot change. He writes, "But as for matter, keep in mind that it has been determined [by Hermogenes] once for all to be eternal (*aeternam*), because it is unmade (*infectam*) and unborn (*innatam*), and that therefore it must also be deemed to possess an immutable (*indemutabilis*) and incorruptible (*incompactibilis*) nature."⁹³ Since Hermogenes claims that matter is eternal, Tertullian demands in the above passage that he must also accept 1) matter's lack of a beginning and 2) matter's stability from all manner of change or corruption. Tertullian's demand is a rhetorical effort meant to show that Hermogenes contradicts himself. Tertullian simultaneously argues that only a single and unique being

⁹² Habes Sophiam prior autem abyssu genita sum dicentem, ut credas abyssum quoque genitam, id est factam, quia et filios facimus, licet generemus. Nihil interest facta an nata sit abyssus, dum initium detur illi, quod non daretur, si materiae subiecta esset.

⁹³ *Herm.* 12.3: Materiam uero tene semel aeternam determinatam ut infectam, ut innatam et ideo indemutabilis et incompactibilis naturae credendam.

can logically possess the divine attributes, which include a lack of a beginning and therefore eternity.

Novatian approaches the subject of the Father's eternity with a set of attributes similar to those found in Cicero and Tertullian.⁹⁴ God's simplicity and oneness eliminate the possibility of change. Novatian writes,

God is, therefore, immortal (*immortalis*) and incorruptible (*incorruptibilis*), experiencing neither diminution (*detrimenta*) nor end (*finem*) of any sort. Because He is incorruptible, He is also immortal, and because He is immortal, He is therefore also incorruptible. Both attributes are reciprocally linked together between and in themselves by a mutual relationship. Thus are they brought by the ensuing union to the condition of eternity (*aeternitatis*). [*Trin.* 4.12]⁹⁵

Novatian argues from the interdependence of the concepts of immortality and incorruptibility, with eternity expressing the union of the two.⁹⁶ *Immortalis* and *incorruptibilis* are set off as opposing attributes to *detrimentum* and *finem*.⁹⁷

Additionally, he rejects the possibility of change for God, either in the form of corruption

⁹⁴ Stead states, "Christian writers almost without exception adopted the doctrine of God's changeless being, often confirming their belief with the argument derived from Plato's *Republic* (2.380-1): God, being all-powerful, cannot suffer change at the hands of any other; he could only change if he were to change himself. But this is impossible; being perfect, he cannot change for the better; and being good, he will not make himself worse; and this seems to exhaust all the possibilities," *Philosophy*, 128.

⁹⁵ Est ergo et immortalis et incorruptibilis, nec detrimenta sentiens omnino, nec finem. Nam et quia incorruptibilis, ideo et immortalis; et quia immortalis, utique et incorruptibilis; utroque inuicem sibi et in se connexione mutua perplexo, et ad statum aeternitatis uicaria concatenatione producto, et immortalitate de incorruptione descendente, et incorruptione de immortalitate ueniente.

⁹⁶ Papandrea treats these three terms simply as synonymous and with an opposite meaning to be found in the term *fragilitas*, in *Trinitarian Theology*, 67. Papandrea underestimates the individual value of these terms by reading them as equivalent, since Novatian's work presents a more sophisticated relationship between them. At one point, Papandrea acknowledges the levels of meaning between eternal and everlasting in addition to the fact that "Novatian implies that the Son cannot be 'infinite,' since *infinitum* implies, not only an existence without beginning (*originem nesciens*), but also an existence which encompasses all other being," *Trinitarian Theology*, 71. However, Papandrea reads this distinction as relevant only to the Father as logically causal in relation to the Son rather than as significant for qualifying the nature of the Son's divinity. I will address these topics in chapter 7.

⁹⁷ I think that it makes sense to read the second set of terms as oppositional to the first set, but in reverse order (*immortalis/finem* and *incorruptibilis/detrimentum*). The link between these terms is not novel. For example, Tertullian states in *An.* 50, "He pretends to have received such a commission from the secret power of One above, that all who partake of his baptism become immortal, incorruptible and instantaneously invested with resurrection-life." In *Trin.* 2.3, Novatian also declares God's lack of time and concludes, "Therefore He is immortal, for He does not pass away (*deficiens*) to a consummate end (*exitu*)." Here *deficiens* and *detrimentum* may function as parallels since *finem* and *exitum* certainly do in *Trin.*

or diminution (*incompactibilis* and *detrimenta*). Novatian is most likely influenced by Tertullian's use of the term *incompactibilis*.⁹⁸

Novatian also argues that God's inability to change derives from God's simple nature. This position was widely shared not only by Christians, but also by most philosophers.⁹⁹ Novatian speaks of God being "simple, without any corporeal mixture."¹⁰⁰ The affirmation of God's simplicity stands behind his logic in other passages related to God's inability to change through increase or decrease. Novatian views the ideas of growth or diminishment as being at odds with a simple nature. He states,

Therefore there is never any addition of parts or of glory in Him, lest anything should seem to have ever been wanting to the perfect one. Nor can there be any question of diminution (*detrimentum*) in Him for that would imply that some degree of mortality is in Him. On the contrary, what He is, He always is; who He is He always is; such as He is, He always is. For increase indicates a beginning; whereas any wasting away (*detrimenta*) evidences death and destruction (*mortem atque interitum*). [*Trin.* 4.4-5, slightly modified]¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ See above for the quotation of *Herm.* 12.3. Cicero uses the term *incompacta* once in *Nat. d.* 2.71 in reference only to the need for a pure heart and mind in worshipping. It is not a term used of divinity itself. However, Novatian's determination that the concept of incorruptibility parallels the inability of divinity to breakdown or die can be easily applied to other parts of the tradition, especially Cicero's formulations about having a beginning and end. In *Dogm. Plat.* 1.9, Apuleius uses *incompacta* once in describing matter, which shares such a trait with the first essences because of its median position between these and creation. Tertullian's influence on Novatian regarding the use of the term is therefore probable.

⁹⁹ As noted above, the Epicurean school was the exception to this teaching based upon the doctrine of divine atomism.

¹⁰⁰ *Trin.* 5.6: Est enim simplex et sine ulla corporea concretione. Novatian follows typical language which can be found in any number of philosophic and Christian texts. See, for example, Irenaeus' *Haer.* 2.13.3: "...He is a simple, uncompounded Being, without diverse members, and altogether like, and equal to Himself..." (...simplex et non compositus et similimembrius et totus ipse sibimetipsi similis et aequalis est...) Stead quotes this passage from Irenaeus to illustrate the following point: "The mathematical approach to theology culminates in the doctrine that God is not only unchanging and self-consistent, but also undivided in the most radical sense; he is pure Being; he has nothing corresponding to distinct organs or faculties, because his whole being is involved in each perception and action. It is nevertheless held by many orthodox Christians that the one God can exercise a variety of powers or energies, and that these do not compromise his perfect simplicity," *Philosophy*, 108.

¹⁰¹ Ideo nec adiectio in illo umquam ullius aut partis aut honoris accedit, ne quid umquam perfectio defuisse uideatur, nec detrimentum in eo aliquod agitur, ne gradus mortalitatis receptus esse uideatur, sed quod est, id semper est, et qui est, semper ipse est, et qualis est, semper talis est. Nam et incrementa originem monstrant et detrimenta mortem atque interitum probant.

Novatian denies the addition of parts to God because it violates the idea of divine simplicity. With the same logic, he denies any form of change in God, because it implies mortality.

It appears that Novatian wrote *Trin.* 4 with Tertullian's *Herm.* 12 in mind.

Novatian's *detrimenta* refers to the action of change by diminishment, whereas Tertullian chides Hermogenes repeatedly with various forms of the word *demuto* (to change through diminishment). Since Tertullian equates eternity with the inability to change, he argues that Hermogenes' understanding of Matter as the source of evil and God as the source of good must be absolute. Tertullian writes,

Now it will be necessary to regard nature as certain and fixed, no less persisting in evil when it occurs in matter, than in good when it occurs in God; it must of course be inconvertible and immutable (*inconuertibilem et indemutabilem*), because if in matter nature can be changed (*demutabitur*) from evil to good, it can also be changed (*demutari*) in God from good to evil. [*Herm.* 12.1]¹⁰²

Tertullian dismisses the logical possibility that change, diminishment, mortality, or corruption could apply to the eternal (and therefore good and simple) God. He repeatedly suggests that Hermogenes' position must lead to the conclusion that either God is not supreme or that God is subject to diminishment.

Following Tertullian's reliance on the term *demuto*, Novatian emphasizes God's immutable nature with the term *muto*. When he denounces the possibility of any change in God,¹⁰³ Novatian states,

¹⁰² Naturam certam et fixam haberi oportebit, tam in malo perseuerantem apud materiam quam et in bono apud deum, inconuertibilem et indemutabilem scilicet, quod si demutabitur natura in materia de malo in bonum, demutari poterit et in deo de bono [non] in malum.

¹⁰³ Novatian cites Mal. 3:6, stating, "and therefore He says: 'I am God, and have not changed (*mutates*),' He always retains His manner (*statum*) of Being, because what is not born (*natum*) is not subject to change (*conuerti*)," *Trin.* 4.5. When Evans analyzes Tertullian's terminology, he writes, "We shall therefore suspect that the difference between *status* and *substantia* is that the former means 'existence', while the latter means the existent thing: i.e., if *substantia* is indicated by the existential verb, *status* represents the copula in so far as it attaches attributes which are permanent (the *proprietaes*), those

He is always, therefore, equal to Himself; he never changes (*uertit*) or transforms (*mutat*) Himself into other forms, lest through changes (*immutationem*) He should appear to be also mortal. For the modification (*immutatio*) implied in change (*conuersionis*) from one thing to another involves a share in death of some sort.” [Trin. 4.4]¹⁰⁴

Novatian makes the possibility of divine change a logical paradox, since he defines eternity as the inability to change.¹⁰⁵ Novatian uses the phrase “equal to Himself” to identify the Father’s simplicity and inability to change.¹⁰⁶ We recall that Apuleius offered a similar statement about God, which may have influenced Novatian’s phrasing.¹⁰⁷ However, I believe Tertullian’s influence is greatest on Novatian in the passage above. Tertullian makes the same point at the end of *Herm.* 12, although his formulation differs from Novatian’s. Tertullian writes, “But eternity cannot be lost because, unless it cannot be lost, it is not eternity. For the same reason it could not have admitted of changer either, because if it is eternity, it cannot be changed in any way.”¹⁰⁸ Novatian follows Tertullian’s understanding that change is the negation of eternity.

which are *secundum condicionem*, and constitute the *natura* of the object,” *Tertullian’s Treatise*, 52. In the case of *status*, I think it likely that Tertullian’s usage influenced Novatian’s. See also Novatian’s use of the term in *Trin.* 4.7.

¹⁰⁴ Hic ergo semper sui est similis nec se umquam in aliquas formas uertit aut mutat, ne per immutationem etiam mortalis esse uideatur. Immutatio enim conuersionis portio cuiusdam comprehenditur mortis.

¹⁰⁵ D. F. Kelly reads Novatian in the opposite way. He writes, “...the stoic logic aided Novatian and his predecessors to retain the temporal element in God’s Being and Acts for us (against the ‘timeless’ immovable mover of Greek philosophy). The stoic practice of examining a real individual subject in its own light leads the observer to see it as a living whole, which involves movement in its very wholeness. Hence because individuals change without ceasing to be real, change per se is not degrading. This advance in thought opens up whole new areas of reality that earlier had been ruled out,” “Beneficial Influence of Stoic Logic,” 825.

¹⁰⁶ The phrase is used only in regard to the Supreme God in that it carries with it the assumption that the Supreme God can have no equal.

¹⁰⁷ See my citation of *Dogm. Plat.* 1.6 in chapter 1 in the section “Apuleius.” The possible influence on Novatian and the similarity with which Apuleius and he formulate divine simplicity with phrasing about the Father being equal to himself as an expression of simplicity and the inability to change convinces me that D. F. Kelly’s assessment (cited above) is incorrect. It is also important to point out that Tertullian speaks throughout *Herm.* about the Father having no equal. in a way which may have suggested the same idea to Novatian.

¹⁰⁸ *Herm.* 12.4: Sed aeternitas amitti non potest, quia nisi amitti non possit, aeternitas non est. Ergo nec demutationem potuit admisisse, quia si aeternitas est, demutari nullo modo potest.

I suggest that Novatian opted for *muto*, in place of Tertullian's *demuto*, because of the difference in polemical targets. Tertullian challenges Hermogenes by saying that his theology leads to God's ultimate diminishment. Although Novatian's Sabellian opponents did not eternalize matter, they taught that the Father became the Son. Novatian found the change in the Supreme God's place and function intolerable. Therefore, he sets his sights on the notion of any kind of change. Novatian wanted to emphasize the point that change (*muto*), not just Tertullian's emphasis on diminishing change (*demuto*), cannot apply to the Supreme God because it violates the understanding that the divine nature is incorruptible.

Topological Theology

W. Schoedel wrote several articles which examine the theological tradition of identifying God as enclosing or containing the world as well as the corollary position that God cannot be enclosed or contained by the world or anything in it.¹⁰⁹ Schoedel coins the term "topological theology," which refers to the connection between the subjects of God enclosing/containing the world and God's relationship to place or location (*topos/locus*). According to Schoedel, these categories originally came from pre-Socratic philosophers as well as Aristotle,¹¹⁰ but by the second century A.D. philosophers, Jews, Gnostics, and Christians had incorporated them into their thinking.

¹⁰⁹ William R. Schoedel, "'Topological' Theology and Some Monistic Tendencies in Gnosticism," in *Essays on the Nag Hammadi Texts in Honour of Alexander Böhlig*, Ed. Krause, Martin (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 88-108, and "Enclosing, not Enclosed: The Early Christian Doctrine of God," in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition*. Eds. William R. Schoedel and Robert L. Wilkin (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979), 75-86.

¹¹⁰ Schoedel writes, "The debate in the early church came to a focus in the formula 'enclosing, not enclosed' and related expressions. The use here of the verb 'to enclose' (περιέχειν) seems to have two main sources: (a) the pre-Socratic description of the origination substance as divine and the enclosing all

Schoedel argues that the original formulation of this tradition dealt with the interaction between two substances (material and divine) interacting in a given space. He credits Philo with eliminating the notion of substantial interaction by emphasizing a description of God as transcendent.¹¹¹ Schoedel writes, “To say that God encloses all things and is not enclosed means for Philo (a) that God is immaterial and not in a place, (b) that he is unknowable in his essence, and (c) that he is creator of all things.”¹¹² Furthermore, Schoedel suggests, “An indication of the novelty of Philo’s thought in this connection is the emphasis, perhaps for the first time, on the idea that the essence of God is unknowable.”¹¹³ This description of Philo’s theology can be applied to Novatian, as well as to Irenaeus and others. By the time Novatian wrote, the enclosing/not enclosed antithesis includes a number of terms and ideas which were often linked, albeit expressed with different emphases.¹¹⁴ These ideas consist of discussions about 1) the possibility of the physical intersection between some substance and the substance of the Supreme being, 2) the correspondence between the power and supremacy of a containing thing/being, and finally 3) the question of divine transcendence and immanence.

Novatian’s writing addresses, to one degree or another, these three topics. For example, he denies the possibility of the Father’s specific manifestation in any particular

things, (b) Aristotle’s discussion of the infinite (*Phys.* 3.4-8, 202b 30), of place (4.1-5, 208a 27), and of the void (4.6-9, 213a 12),” “Enclosing, not Enclosed,” 75-76.

¹¹¹ Schoedel notes Wolfson’s contention that the formula originally came from Rabbinic teachings as well as Dillon’s suggestion that Philo gleaned his interpretation from now-lost Platonic sources. See Schoedel “‘Topological’ Theology,” 96, for his own suggestion concerning the possible influence of “Posidonian Stoicism” based on the heavy use of the terms *cohibere*, *continere*, and *complecti* in *Nat. d. 2*. Schoedel also explains, “Philo’s use of the formula presupposes a new concern in the philosophical tradition. A sharp distinction between God and anthropomorphic conceptions of deity is made. This contrast is expressed with the help of the philosophical distinction between immutable spiritual substance and material substance subject to movement and change,” “‘Topological’ Theology,” 95.

¹¹² Schoedel, “Enclosing, not Enclosed,” 76.

¹¹³ *Idem.*

¹¹⁴ Schoedel takes note of examples that God cannot be contained, which are found in the works of Justin, Theophilus, and Irenaeus, among others in, “‘Topological’ Theology,” 90-91.

place. In *Trin.* 3.3, for example, he rebuts the idea that a temple can enclose (*capere*) God.¹¹⁵ He argues the same point when he states,

Thus the people were permitted to erect the tabernacle, although God cannot be contained (*continetur*) within a temple. The temple was constructed, although God cannot possibly be enclosed (*saepitur*) within the narrow limits of a temple. God is not finite (*non mediocris*), but the people's faculty of perceiving is finite (*mediocris*). [*Trin.* 6.3]¹¹⁶

He believes the Father's divinity precludes localization.¹¹⁷ "If they say that God the Father almighty came," Novatian writes, "then God the Father came from a place (*loco*); consequently, He is also enclosed (*cluditur*) by space (*loco*) and contained (*continetur*) within the limits of some abode."¹¹⁸

As noted in chapter 2, Novatian treats the possibility of man knowing God as impossible because this would mean that man somehow contains God. Novatian also affirms the reciprocal position: God must contain the universe, otherwise the universe will be greater than God.¹¹⁹ Novatian may have found inspiration for these positions in Theophilus' work. In *Autol.* 2.3, Theophilus succinctly connects the above topics, stating,

But it is characteristic of the Most High and Almighty God, who is actually God, not only to be everywhere but to *look upon everything and hear everything* [*Od.* xi. 108], and not to be confined in a place; otherwise, the place containing him

¹¹⁵ *Trin.* 3.3 states, "Again, He says through the prophet: 'Heaven is My throne, earth the footstool under My feet: what sort of home will you build for Me, or what is the Place of My rest?'—this to make it clear that since the world cannot contain Him, much less can a temple enclose Him." This is not the theology of, for example, 1 Kings 8:27-30, which speaks of the Temple being unable to contain God but also affirms God's position in heaven as a distant dwelling place.

¹¹⁶ Sic et tabernaculum erigere populo permittitur, nec tamen Deus intra tabernaculum clusus continetur. Sic et templum extruitur, nec tamen Deus intra templi angustias omnino saepitur. Non igitur mediocris est Deus, sed populi mediocris est sensus.

¹¹⁷ Schoedel notes an applicable distinction Aristotle makes in *De caelo* 312a 12: "In a discussion of the disposition of the elements in the universe we learn that 'that which encloses has to do with form, whereas that which is enclosed has to do with matter,'" "'Topological' Theology," 94. See also Justin's *Dial.* 114 where he argues that only an anthropomorphic understanding of the Father can justify the Father's theophanic appearance. He concludes therefore that the theophanies necessarily involve the Word.

¹¹⁸ *Trin.* 12.7.

¹¹⁹ *Trin.* 4.9.

would be greater than he is, for what contains is greater than what is contained. God is not contained but is himself the locus (τόπος) of the universe.¹²⁰

As Theophilus suggests in this passage, Novatian also blended the topics of the spatial and intellectual containment of God into a question of dominance.¹²¹ If God can be localized in a temple or understood by a mind, then God would be less supreme than the containing things (the temple or the mind).

Novatian's rejection of divine localization came with an equally forceful affirmation of God's all-pervasiveness.¹²² Forms of this theological position can be found in various traditions.¹²³ Novatian begins *Trin.* 6.3 (quoted on the previous page) by citing Ps. 139:8-10, "For it is written: 'If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I descend into hell, You are present; and if I take my wings and depart across the sea, there

¹²⁰ Schoedel notes several instances of Irenaeus' affirmation that the Father cannot be contained, such as *Haer.* 1.15.5, and he also suggests that *Haer.* 2.1.2 "is only verbally distinct from Theophilus' remark" in *Autol.* 2.3, in "'Topological' Theology," 92. Like Theophilus, and Novatian after him, Irenaeus attributes greatness to that which contains. See also Justin's *Dial.* 127 for an exposition of the same themes.

¹²¹ *Trin.* 3.3-4.

¹²² Schoedel's discussion of Philo applies: "From the earliest period, the term 'enclosing' served to express not only transcendence but also immanence. Philo more than once couples 'enclosing' with 'filling' or 'pervading' in his description of God's relation to the world (*Conf. ling.* 136; *Leg. alleg.* 1.44; *Post. Cain* 14). In this connection he introduces the important distinction between God as transcendent (that is, enclosing all, in the proper sense of the term) according to his nature or essence and God as immanent according to his power and goodness (*Migr. Abr.* 182). Such themes were later taken over into Christian theology and were naturally extended to include the theme of incarnation," "Enclosing, not Enclosed" 85.

¹²³ See, for example, the *Teachings of Silvanus*, a work which M. Peel and J. Zandee describe as "clearly indebted to Jewish and Hellenistic Jewish wisdom literature," in "The Teachings of Silvanus," in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*. Edited by James M. Robinson (New York: Harper Collins, 1990): 379. The work states, "Furthermore, I shall speak of what is more exalted than this: the mind, with respect to actual being, is in a place, which means it is in the body; but with respect to thought, the mind is not in a place. For how can it be in a place when it contemplates every place? But we are able to mention what is more exalted than this: for do not think in your heart that God exists [in a] place. If you localize the [Lord of] all in a place, then it is fitting for you to say that the place is more exalted than he who dwells in it. For that which contains is more exalted than that which is contained," Ibid. 387. I note in the next chapter that Stoic theories of the pervasiveness of the divine substance most likely played an influence on Middle Platonic thinking.

shall Your hand take hold of me, and Your right hand hold me fast.”¹²⁴ God contains all because of His supremacy, but His immanence also testifies to His supremacy.

After using *Trin.* 1 to discuss the work of creation, Novatian begins chapter 2 by introducing God’s immanence with enclosing language. He states,

Over all these things is He, who contains (*continens*) all things and who leaves nothing devoid (*uacuum*) of Himself; He has left no room for a superior god as some think. Since He Himself has enclosed (*incluserit*) all things in the bosom of His perfect greatness and power (*magnitudinis et potestatis*), He is always intent (*intentus*) on His own work and pervades (*uadens*) all things, moves (*mouens*) all things, gives life (*uiuificans*) to all things, and observes (*conspiciens*) all things. [*Trin.* 2.1]¹²⁵

In this case, Novatian connects “containing” language to God’s personal care and contact with creation.¹²⁶

Novatian also uses *Trin.* 2.1, quoted just above, to identify God’s greatness and power (*magnitudinis* and *potestas*) as the means by which He encloses the world and therefore cares for it. Although the term *providentia* does not appear in this passage, I showed in chapter 3 that Novatian uses this term to describe the care which God constantly provides the creation. *Providentia* is also a term which Novatian connects to God’s containment of all things.

¹²⁴ *Trin.* 6.2: Scriptum est enim: Si ascendero in caelum, tu ibi es; si descendero ad inferos, ades; et si assumpsero alas meas et abiero trans mare, ibi manus tua apprehendet me et dextera tua detinebit me.

¹²⁵ Super quae omnia ipse continens cuncta, nihil extra se uacuum deserens, nulli deo superiori, ut quidam putant, locum reliquit, quandoquidem ipse uniuersa sinu perfectae magnitudinis et potestatis incluserit, intentus semper operi suo et uadens per omnia et mouens cuncta et uiuificans uniuersa et conspiciens tota...

¹²⁶ Novatian certainly rejects some of Tertullian’s language concerning the Father’s transcendence, such as can be found in *Prax.* 16: “Besides, how can it be that God Almighty, that invisible one whom none of men hath seen nor can see, he who dwelleth in light unapproachable, he who dwelleth not in things made with hands, before whose aspect the earth trembleth, and the mountains melt as wax, who graspeth the whole world in his hand like a nest, whose throne is the heaven and the earth his footstool, in whom is all space but he not in space (*in quo omnis locus, non ipse in loco*), who is the boundary line of the universe...”

The clearest example of Novatian explaining *providentia* is found in *Trin.* 8.6.

Although I cited this passage in chapter 3, I cite it again in order to point out other important aspects of Novatian's theology:

And lest anyone should think that this indefatigable providence (*infatigabilem prouidentiam*) of God does not also embrace the least things, the Lord said: "One of two sparrows shall not fall to the ground without the Father's Will (*Patris uoluntate*); for even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." His care and providence (*cura et prouidentia*) neither allowed the garments of the Israelites to perish... And this is not without reason for if He who contains (*continens*) all things embraces (*complexus*) all things (all things, however, and the whole sum are made up of individual parts), then it follows logically that His care (*cura*) will be bestowed on every individual part because His providence (*prouidentia*) extends to the whole, whatever it be. [*Trin.* 8.6]¹²⁷

Trin. 2.1 and 8.6 both describe the same relationship between God and the world: through His greatness, power, and providence, God contains, permeates, and cares for the world.

Novatian's use of power and providence brings to mind the theology of Ps.-Aristotle's *Mund.* According to *Mund.*, God sustains and maintains all things through power rather than through the presence of God Himself.¹²⁸ Apuleius, in his translation of Ps.-Aristotle's work,¹²⁹ explains the concept of God's immanence as power with the

¹²⁷ Et ne quis non etiam ad minima quaeque Dei putaret istam infatigabilem prouidentiam peruenire, *Ex duobus*, inquit Dominus, *passeribus unus non cadet sine Patris uoluntate, sed et capilli capitis uestri omnes numerati sunt*. Cuius etiam cura et prouidentia Israelitarum non siuit nec uestes consumi... Nec immerito, nam si hic omnia complexus est omnia continens, omnia autem et totum ex singulis constant, pertinet consequenter eius ad usque singula quaeque cura, cuius ad totum quicquid est peruenit prouidentia.

¹²⁸ *Mund.* 24 explains the notion that gods existed in the world by claiming that God's power was the thing present, "Neque ulla res est tam praestantibus uiribus, quae <eius> uiduata auxilio sui natura contenta sit. Hanc opinionem uates secuti profiteri ausi sunt, omnia Ioue plena esse, cuius praesentiam non iam cogitatio sola, sed oculi et aures et sensibilis substantia comprehendit. At haec composita est pot<estati, non autem mai>estati dei conueniens oratio." See Apuleius' use of *potestas* throughout his translation of *Mund.* 24-5. Other uses of power were available to Novatian. Compare, for example, 1 Clement 33 which identifies power with God's control over the world: "So likewise, when He had formed the sea, and the living creatures which are in it, He enclosed them [within their proper bounds] by His own power (*dunamis*)."

¹²⁹ Harrison writes, "The *De Mundo* is a relatively faithful translation of the extant pseudo-Aristotelian *Περὶ Κόσμου*, an influential treatise on the nature of the universe most probably written in the first century BC, with considerable literary pretensions which *De Mundo* follows," *Apuleius*, 181.

phrase *infatigabilis providentia*.¹³⁰ I am unaware of this phrase being used by an author other than Novatian. In light of the fact that Novatian and Apuleius are each speaking about providence and power to describe the immanent presence of God, I believe it probable that Novatian borrows Apuleius' language.

However, Novatian limits his dependence on the theology of *Mund.* He does not follow *Mund.* in suggesting that the Supreme God remains above and apart from creation with only His power permeating all things.¹³¹ Instead, Novatian implies God's personal pervasiveness. Such a position calls to mind Philo's development of this idea, which Schoedel notes in his description. Novatian states, "As for the rest, He Himself [is] all eye, because the whole sees, and all ear because the whole hears, and all hand because the whole is at work, and all foot because the whole is everywhere. Likewise, whatever it is that He is, the whole is consistent and all is everywhere."¹³² Novatian relies on the affirmation of God's simplicity to suggest that God's presence or nature, whatever it is, is everywhere equally.¹³³ When Novatian suggests that God as a whole is consistent and thus everywhere, he marks the difference between, on the one hand speaking about immanence through activity and/or power such as found in the theology of *Mund.*, and on

¹³⁰ *Mund.* 24: Sospitator quidem ille et genitor est omnium, qui ad complendum mundum nati factique sunt; non tamen ut corporei laboris officio orbem istum manibus suis instruxerit, sed qui quadam infatigabili providentia et procul posita cuncta contingit, et maximis intervallis disiuncta conplectitur.

¹³¹ See *Mund.* 25. There is some disagreement in scholarship over whether the Supreme God in *Mund.* stands completely outside of the universe or in the highest realm of it. See Armstrong, *Christian Faith*, 8 for the first view, and Hunt, *Christianity in the Second Century*, 90 for the second.

¹³² *Trin.* 6.8 [trans. Papandrea]: Ceterum ipse totus oculus, quia totus uidet, et totus auris, quia totus audit, et totus manus, quia totus operatur, et totus pes, quia totus ubique est. Idem enirn, quicquid illud est, totus aequalis est et totus ubique est. As pointed out by Schoedel, "'Topological' Theology," 101, the phrasing which attributes wholeness in mind along with anthropomorphic terminology of completeness has a long history. He offers numerous examples, including Ps.-Aristotle's *On Melissus, Xenophanes, and Gorgias* 3, Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* 7.5.5, and Irenaeus' *Haer.* 1.12.2; 2.13.2; 2.13.8; 2.28.4; 4.11.1.

¹³³ *Trin.* 6.9.

the other hand speaking about God's nature as somehow immanent. His understanding of God's immanence depends on the idea that all place is contained in Him.

Irenaeus' *Haer.* 2.13.7 provides another possible source for Novatian's thought.

Irenaeus writes,

Further, they must also confess either that He is mere vacuity, or that the entire universe is within Him; and in that case all will in like degree partake of the Father...If on the other hand, they acknowledge that He is vacuity, then they fall into the greatest blasphemy; they deny His spiritual nature. For how can He be a spiritual being, who cannot fill even those things which are within Him?¹³⁴

I quoted this passage in chapter 2 because of Irenaeus' attachment to the idea that God's nature is spiritual. Novatian's denial of a correspondence between the term "spirit" and God's substance sets him apart from Irenaeus and Tertullian; however, Novatian's thought aligns with both authors in terms of the expression of divine immanence.

Novatian adds some clarity to *Trin.* 6.8 in chapter 17 by connecting "containing" language to the term *locus*. I refer to this passage here and again in a few pages, taking note of different aspects of his terminology. Novatian writes,

Finally, what would you reply if I should say that the same Moses everywhere represents God the Father as boundless (*immensus*), without end (*fine*)? He cannot be confined (*cludatur*) by space (*loco*), for He includes (*cludat*) all space (*locum*). He is not in one place (*loco*), but rather all place (*locus*) is in Him. He contains (*continentem*) all things and embraces (*complexum*) all things; therefore He cannot descend or ascend inasmuch as He contains (*continent*) all things and fills (*implet*) all things. [*Trin.* 17.7]¹³⁵

Novatian links God's containing and embracing all things to the idea that all place resides in God. This connection allows him to claim that God fills all things. It is

¹³⁴ Translations of *Haer.* are Roberts and Donaldson's.

¹³⁵ Quid si idem Moyses ubique introducit Deum Patrem immensum atque sine fine, non qui loco cludatur, sed qui omnem locum cludat, nec eum qui in loco sit, sed potius in quo omnis locus sit, omnia continentem et cuncta complexum, ut merito nec descendat nec ascendat, quoniam ipse omnia et continet et implet. This passage repeats some of the same terms and themes as already seen in *Trin.* 8.6. There, and only there, Novatian conjoined the terms *cura* and *providentia* in order to gloss the idea of God containing and embracing all things.

tempting to read the above passage as merely a rephrasing of *Trin.* 2.1, in which Novatian states that God “enclosed all things in the bosom of His perfect greatness and power.” In that case, *Trin.* 17.7 would only correspond to the idea of God’s immanence as power or activity such as in *Mund.* Novatian, however, makes a point similar to the one found in Theophilus’ *Autol.* 2.3. Unlike Irenaeus and Tertullian, Theophilus and Novatian maintain God’s essential pervasiveness without resorting to the category of spirit. In this, Theophilus and Novatian distance themselves from one aspect of Stoic language about divine pervasiveness.¹³⁶

God as Infinitus and Immensus

The terms *infinitus* and *immensus* contribute to Novatian’s explanation of the topological theology already presented. Like his nuanced articulation of God’s relationship to time, Novatian does not simply affirm God’s incomprehensible (and uncategorizable) nature as transcending, containing, and pervading all things. He also develops a technical sense of the terms *infinitus* and *immensus* when referring to the Father. These terms appear in both his Christian and non-Christian sources. When Novatian speaks about creation with the words *infinitas* and *immensus*, he refers to vastness. However, as with *aeternus*, Novatian reserves a superlative and incomparable meaning for *infinitus* and *immensus* when he writes about the Father’s relationship with space.

¹³⁶ I use language here instead of “logic,” because it is important to concede the point that Novatian and Theophilus may yet be influenced by other aspects of Stoic theories of divine pervasiveness.

In Cicero's *Nat. d.* the terms *infinita/us* and *immensus*¹³⁷ refer to both space¹³⁸ and time.¹³⁹ The closest any of the speakers come in Cicero's work to technical language is the Epicurean, who speaks about the physical necessity of the gods and atoms as infinite.¹⁴⁰ In *Herm.*, Tertullian brings up the terms briefly to challenge Hermogenes' disciples in their application of *infinitas* to time. According to Tertullian, Hermogenes used the terms *infinitas* and *immensus* to speak only about Matter's spatial aspect. He writes,

And if one of your pupils proposes to argue that you will have it understood that matter is infinite in time (*infinitam aeuo*), not in the quantity of its body, then the words which follow show that it is, on the contrary, infinite in regard to its body (*corporaliter infinitam*), since it is regarding its body that it is unmeasurable (*immensam*) and unbounded (*incircumscriptam*). "Wherefore, too," you say, "it is worked up, not as a whole, but in its parts." Hence it is infinite in body (*corpore infinita*), not in time and you will stand refuted when you make it infinite in body, whereas <, on the other hand,> by assigning a place in space to it, you include it within that place and its outline. [*Herm.* 38.3]¹⁴¹

Tertullian does not fear that the change of terminological meaning will lead to theological concessions on his part.¹⁴² Rather, he wants to force the followers of Hermogenes into following the definitions of the terms which Hermogenes himself apparently fixed.

¹³⁷ In Cicero's work, the spelling is almost always *immensus*. The same spelling discrepancy was seen with Cicero's *immortalitas* as compared with the later customary spelling *immortalitas*.

¹³⁸ E.g. *Nat. d.* 1.26 which states, "Next Anaximenes held that air is god, and that it has a beginning in time, and is immeasurable (*immensum*) and infinite (*infinitum*) in extent." See also *Nat. d.* 1.54, 1.73, and 2.15.

¹³⁹ E.g. *Nat. d.* 1.22, which states, "Well then, Balbus, what I ask is, why did your Providence remain idle all through that extent of time (*immenso spatio*) of which you speak?...If it was to embellish his own abode, then it seems that he had previously been dwelling for an infinite time (*tempore infinito*) in a dark and gloomy hovel!" See also *Nat. d.* 1.22, 2.15, and 2.85.

¹⁴⁰ *Nat. d.* 1.50; 54. The language chosen by the Epicurean is influenced by the position that the universe must be infinite in order to account for atoms and void.

¹⁴¹ Et si qui discipulorum tuorum uoluerit argumentari, quasi infinitam? aeuo, non modo corporis intellegi uelis, atquin corporaliter infinitam, ut corporaliter immensam et incircumscriptam, sequentia ostendunt. 'Vnde,' inquis, 'nec tota fabricatur sed partes eius.' Adeo corpore infinita, non tempore est et obduceris corpore <e>am infinitam faciens, cum locum ei adscribens intra locum et extremam loci lineam includis.

¹⁴² A significant amount of *Herm.* contains Tertullian's argument that divine attributes can only be possessed by one being. They must be either God's or Matter's.

According to Tertullian, Hermogenes used the terms *infinitas*, *immensus*, and *incircumscriptus* only in reference to space and mass.

The evidence from Cicero and Tertullian shows no philosophical consensus for *infinitas* and *immensus* as technical terms. However, Tertullian's depiction of Hermogenes' students suggests that some people may have attempted to mark off a more limited definition, at least for *infinitus*. For his part, Tertullian spends little time with either term. Neither show up in *Adversus Praxean*, *De carne Christe*, or *De resurrectione carnis*, but both terms appear a few times in *Adversus Marcionem*.¹⁴³ In that work, Tertullian offers a description of the Supreme God which Marcion should accept. He states, "Exempt then both from order of beginning and from measure of time (*modo temporis*), <God's goodness> must be accounted of age unmeasurable (*immensa*) and without end."¹⁴⁴ In this passage, Tertullian uses *immensus* to speak about God's eternity, but the term seems incidental to the actual concept. Tertullian prefers words and phrases related to God's lack of a beginning and an end to discuss God's eternity. In regard to his own theological expression, the terms were not important enough for him to attempt consistency.

Novatian sets the meanings of the terms *infinitus/um* and *immensus* solely within spatial expression, and he also uses these terms synonymously. It is likely then that *Herm.* influenced his decision; Cicero's work demonstrates no uniform meaning for the terms by any of the schools.¹⁴⁵ In two places, Novatian uses *infinitus* and *immensus* in

¹⁴³ It is not known how many of Tertullian's works were known to Novatian, but scholars have found literary or thematic connections between *Trin.* and all of these works.

¹⁴⁴ *Marc.* 2.3.5: Atque ita carens et ordine initii et modo temporis de immensa et interminabili aetate censebitur.

¹⁴⁵ As noted above, Tertullian used the terms only in refuting the definitions posed by the followers of Hermogenes. Tertullian himself shows no interest in either developing the terms or in making them central to his description of the Father.

light of the vastness of the universe.¹⁴⁶ In the other instances, Novatian treats the terms as unique attributes of the Father's divinity. As noted, the two different levels of meaning for these terms correspond to the levels of meaning I pointed out for Novatian's use of *aeternus*. References to the Father's nature as *aeternus* represent God's lack of time through the absence of a beginning. Novatian's use of *aeternus* in the more general sense refers to an everlasting state, or something which begins but does not end. He presents the Father alone as uniquely *aeternus*, *immensus*, and *infinitus*, even though these terms can be applied in a more general, non-exclusive sense.

For Novatian, God's spatial greatness corresponds to his understanding of God's supremacy and dominion over all other things. Novatian teaches that no being or thing can share the Father's attributes, which include spatial immensity. He explains his thinking in two passages. The first is *Trin.* 4.9:

As the very nature of things demands, there cannot be two infinities (*infinita*). That alone is infinite (*infinitum*) which has neither beginning (*originem*) nor end (*finem*); for whatever occupies the whole excludes the beginning (*initium*) of another. If the infinite does not contain (*continent*) all that exists (whatever it be), then it will find itself within that which contains (*continentur*) it and therefore it will be less than the containing (*continentur*) element. Hence it will cease to be God, since it has been brought under the dominion (*potestatem*) of another whose magnitude will include it because it is the smaller. As a result what contained (*continuit*) it would itself claim to be God.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ In *Trin.* 1.13 Novatian states, "In the higher regions—those above the very firmament itself, which at present are beyond our sight—He previously called the angels into being, arranged the spiritual powers, set over them the Thrones and Powers, created many other measureless spaces (*immensa spatia*) of heavens and mysterious works without limit (*infinita*). Therefore, even this measureless (*immensus*) universe seems to be the latest of God's material creations rather than His only work." After referencing passages from the book of Ezekiel in which Novatian identifies the world as God's chariot. Novatian states in *Trin.* 8.10, "This according to David, is God's chariot. 'The chariot of God,' he says, 'is multiplied ten times a thousand time'; that is, it is incalculable, infinite (*infinitus*), immeasurable (*immensus*)."

¹⁴⁷ Quoniam nec duo infinita esse possunt, ut rerum dictat ipsa natura. Infinitum est autem quicquid nec originem habet omnino nec finem. Excludit enim alterius initium, quicquid occupaverit totum. Quoniam si non omne id quod est quicquid est continet, dum intra id inuenitur quo continetur, minus inuentum eo quo continetur, Deus esse desierit, in alterius potestatem redactus, cuius magnitudine, qua minor, fuerit inclusus, et ideo quod continuit Deus potius esse iam coeperit.

Novatian's argument resembles Tertullian's in *Herm.* in that he starts from the requirement of uniqueness. God the Father is *infinitus* because there can be only one thing without beginning or end. Novatian's explanation relies entirely on the idea that God uniquely contains all things and therefore retains power and dominion over all things. Novatian therefore gives *infinitus* a superlative meaning which can only be attributed to the Father.

In the previous section, I quoted *Trin.* 17.7 in order to show how Novatian's topological theology emphasized all place as residing in God. I cite the passage again to show how Novatian uses the term *immensus* to develop containment language in his topological theology:

Finally, what would you reply if I should say that the same Moses everywhere represents God the Father as boundless (*immensus*), without end (*fine*)? He cannot be confined (*cludatur*) by space (*loco*), for He includes (*cludat*) all space (*locum*). He is not in one place (*loco*), but rather all place (*locus*) is in Him. He contains (*continentem*) all things and embraces (*complexum*) all things; therefore He cannot descend or ascend inasmuch as He contains (*continent*) all things and fills (*implet*) all things. [*Trin.* 17.7]¹⁴⁸

Novatian use of the term *immensus* relates to the Father's unique relationship to space.

Like *infinitus*, *immensus* indicates that God contains and embraces all things (the topological language), because any being which is infinite has neither end nor beginning.

Both terms are attributed to the Father alone in this sense.

The terms *infinitus* and *immensus* play a critical role in Novatian's topological theology; they identify the Father's unique relationship to space. These terms categorize the Father's nature as containing and pervading all things. His use of *infinitus* and

¹⁴⁸ Quid si idem Moyses ubique introducit Deum Patrem immensum atque sine fine, non qui loco cludatur, sed qui omnem locum cludat, nec eum qui in loco sit, sed potius in quo omnis locus sit, omnia continentem et cuncta complexum, ut merito nec descendat nec ascendat, quoniam ipse omnia et continet et implet.

immensus is consistent with knowledge of the philosophical discussions which Cicero lays out in *Nat. d.*, but Novatian demonstrates a unique systematization of the terms to reflect the influence of spatial exclusivity which Tertullian suggests in *Herm.*

Conclusion

Novatian offers a positive theology of the Father in terminology unremarkable to his time.¹⁴⁹ That being said, it is important to this study that I have shown Novatian's familiarity and interaction with topics prevalent in philosophical texts and Christian sources. The importance of Novatian's presentation in regard to the theology of *Trin.* lies in the unique qualities he associates with the Supreme God. In the last chapter, I described the structure by which Novatian placed God at the center of epistemology and theological epistemology. My analysis of Novatian's positive theology in this chapter concludes that the Father possesses attributes which are unique. The Supreme God alone is the Father, one, eternal, and infinite. Because of his theological epistemology, Novatian does not presume that these statements offer exhaustive knowledge about God's attributes. They do, however, offer the ability to point to divine transcendence and supremacy, which Novatian connects uniquely to God the Father.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the philosophic and Christian developments in the Word theology tradition. By keeping in mind the comments made in chapter 1 about the philosophic range of beliefs concerning a hierarchy of divinities, we will notice the importance of Word traditions for addressing the topics of divine transcendence and

¹⁴⁹ I have limited my attention in this chapter to those categories of positive theology Novatian utilizes to identify the unique Father. The focus of this dissertation prevents me the time to explore other themes, such as the affirmation of God's goodness or His concern with justice. See *Trin.* 4.1-3, for examples of Novatian's discussion of these topics.

immanence. I will then show in chapters 6 and 7 the influence which the Word traditions had on *Trin.* and demonstrate that Novatian sets his understanding of the Son's attributes against the unique attributes of the Father. This aspect of my study sets it apart from other scholarly readings of Novatian's work. As seen in the current chapter, as well as in chapter 2, I demonstrated that both philosophic and Christian sources shaped Novatian's theology of the Father. My reading of Novatian's theology of the Son will demonstrate that the theological philosophy which influences him helps to establish the framework by which Novatian juxtaposes his understanding of the Word's divinity with the divinity of the Father.

Chapter Five: The Development of Word Christology

Introduction

In this chapter, I will connect the Logos theologies of Hellenistic philosophy to that of Philo, and then to the Word Christologies leading up to Novatian. As mentioned in the Introduction, my analysis of Word Christology identifies the Word of God (also the Son of God) as the one who became the incarnate Jesus.¹ The topic of Word Christology, therefore, has to do with everything related to the Son's existence, including the generation of the Word, the justification for calling the Son both God the Word (or the Word both Son and God), and all the topics associated with the Word's incarnation.² Of these subjects, I will be addressing topics related to the Word's generation as it is associated with creation and recreation, as well as the Word's distinction from and relationship with the Father in the works of Justin, Theophilus, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Tertullian.³ Novatian's dependence on all of these writers is either clearly demonstrable or very likely.⁴

¹ With this definition, I am narrowing the scholarly usage of 'Word (or Logos) Christology' in order to speak most directly about the Christian development of Logos theology. I, therefore, avoid the Gnostic systems as part of the trajectory which I describe. PHEME PERKINS comments on the distinction between "catholic" and Gnostic Logos Christologies: "When compared with other second century Christian writers, Gnostic Logos Christology is peculiar in its refusal to identify the Logos with the highest God or with an incarnate Christ," in her "Logos Christologies in the Nag Hammadi Codices," VC 35 (1981): 382.

² The inclusion of "Christology" in the phrase "Word Christology" means that all of the topics associated with the Incarnation have a place in this tradition.

³ For the scope of this dissertation, I will not be covering all the topics of Word Christology, such as Christological anthropology. My more modest goal will be to lay emphasis on the relationship between the Father and the Son.

⁴ Although Theophilus may have known Justin's work, Irenaeus certainly knew both of them. Hippolytus and Tertullian used Irenaeus' writings, and most scholars agree that a literary relationship also exists between Tertullian and Hippolytus. Irenaeus refers to the work of Justin in 4.6.2 as well as 5.26.2. For Irenaeus' use of Theophilus, see Anthony Briggman, "Dating Irenaeus' Acquisition of Theophilus' Correspondence *To Autolycus*: A Pneumatological Perspective" StPatr 45 (2010): 397-402. See the my Introduction for comments related to the Hippolytean corpus, in the section "The Roman environment and Novatian's sources."

I will show in this chapter the development of Word Christology in light of attempts to connect the Son to the transcendent Father. This development cannot be viewed as linear in terms of later orthodox positions. The point of the current chapter is to lay out the variety of forms which Word theology took, especially those Christian forms familiar to Novatian. I suggest that Novatian looked at these sources as equally worthy of theological authority. The choices Novatian makes to follow central theological teachings in Justin and Tertullian's work, especially *Herm.*, witnesses to the fact that Novatian did not share the scholarly fixation on the trajectory of an advancing orthodox Word Christology, which can be found on occasion.

For example, although scholars often assess Tertullian's writings as a watershed in Trinitarian thinking (based in no small part on his articulation of Word Christology in his later writings), much of this assessment stands on his theology in *Prax.* I cover *Prax.* in this chapter to analyze specific themes with which Novatian was familiar, even though I will argue that he did not accept all of them. I believe that Novatian disagrees with some of Tertullian's principle theological assertions concerning the nature of the relationship between the Father and Son. To make my case in chapters 6 and 7 for my understanding of Novatian's theology of the Son, I will point to Tertullian's *Herm.* as the primary influence on Novatian. *Herm.* places its theological emphasis on the uniqueness of the transcendent Father, and I believe that Novatian's theology stands within this trajectory.

Prior to its use in Christian theology, some philosophers began incorporating *logos* language into discussions of divine immanence and divine transcendence.⁵

Therefore, I will start this chapter with a brief look at Logos theology in the philosophical traditions. My purpose in tying the philosophical use of *logos* language to Word Christology arises from the conscious effort on the part of the Christian authors with whom I deal to compare similarities between the Gospel and philosophy. All of the Christian authors I present clearly demonstrate the influence of philosophy in their writings.

I will also touch on Philo of Alexandria's Logos theology. Although his influence on Christian authors remains far from certain, Philo's Logos theology includes a personalization of the *logos*. Some scholars argue that this development arises from a Middle Platonic influence. Since we do not possess many Middle Platonic texts of this period, Philo's works provide a possible intellectual bridge for judging early Middle Platonism's influence on Christian Word theology. Finally, I will sketch the development of Word Christology up to Novatian's time. In this tradition, authors advance different forms of Word Christology as a means of expressing the relationship between divine transcendence and divine immanence.

The Gospel of John, especially the Prologue, provides the primary basis for the identification of Jesus the Son as the Word of God. John's Gospel quickly became the source of varied theological speculation throughout the West and the East.⁶ For example, Heracleon, the well known Valentinian, was the first author to write a commentary on

⁵ Numerous studies treat divine transcendence, divine immanence, or the relationship between them. See for example Armstrong and Markus, *Christian Faith*, chapters 1-3; Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, chapters 2 and 6; and Osborn's, *Emergence of Christian Theology*, chapters 4 and 6.

⁶ Pollard, *Johannine Christology*, 52.

John.⁷ Several 2nd and 3rd century authors used John's Gospel to connect the Johannine *logos* with Old Testament passages about God's Word and Law.⁸ This situation as allow some authors, such as D. Boyarin, to offer accounts of competing Jewish and Christian exegetical traditions of Old Testament passages related to various forms of Logos theologies.⁹ Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Novatian make the Gospel of John central to their formulation of Christology as did the Monarchians.¹⁰ I defer from commenting on either John's Gospel or other scriptural texts until later chapters when I will contextualize the use of such passages, specifically in *Trin.*

Logos Theology in Philosophy

The Stoics used *logos* language to differentiate between a *logos endiathetos* (ενδιάθετος--internal rationalization or mathematical ratio) and a *logos prophorikos* (προφορικός--external expression, or voice).¹¹ At times, the Stoics identified the *logos*

⁷ Maurice Wiles. *The Spiritual Gospel: The interpretation of the fourth gospel in the early church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 3.

⁸ Mark J. Edwards notes the scholarship on both Justin and Melito in analyzing the connection between Nomos and Logos, in "Justin's Logos and the Word of God," *J ECS* 3:3 (1995), 266. Citing W. Rordorf's, "Christus als Nomos und Logos" in A. M. Ritter (ed.), *Kerygma und Logos* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1979), 424-434, Edwards identifies Isa. 2:3 and Mic. 4:2 for the connection between law and word: "there shall come forth a law and word from Zion." Edwards however also points out that, "We cannot prove that Justin was acquainted with rabbinic thought, or even with the Fourth Gospel, but the Johannine terms for Christ were in his own vocabulary," *Idem.*, 266, and see n. 23 for scholarship. Edwards therefore affirms the idea that the language of Logos theology was well established in the ancient intellectual and religious world.

⁹ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Heine, along with others, believes that Origen returned from Rome also with a special interest in weighing in on the theological debate, which included the heavy dependence upon the Gospel of John. He therefore began his *Commentary on John* shortly after his return to Alexandria, "Christology of Callistus," 57-58.

¹¹ Adam Kamesar explains that precedents for this distinction appear in both Plato and Aristotle, though scholars mostly agree that later philosophers treated these ideas as part of Stoic thinking. See Adam Kamesar, "The *Logos Endiathetos* and the *Logos Prophorikos* in Allegorical Interpretation: Philo and the D-Scholia to the *Iliad*," *GRBS* 44 (2004): 163-181, esp. 163-64, for the related scholarly literature on this question. See also Goodenough who notes, "The terms were logical technicalities used to distinguish between thought in the mind and thought expressed verbally," *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 19.

prophorikos within their system as a sound which strikes the air.¹² This understanding of the *logos* identifies how the Stoics explained the formulation of rational thought and the physical expression of words.¹³

Stoic *logos* language provides possible evidence for the outgrowth of a personalized divine figure, found in some Middle Platonic works. Such a development depends upon the Middle Platonic incorporation of the Stoic doctrine regarding divine all-pervasiveness. Stoic thought affirmed the divine as a spiritually material nature and as entirely coterminous with the world. Diogenes Laertius notes, “The substance of God is declared by Zeno to be the whole world and the heaven, as well as by Chrysippus in his first book *Of the Gods*, and by Posidonius in his first book with the same title.”¹⁴

Stoicism rejected the ideal, immaterial world of Platonism as well as the Aristotelian conception of the unmoved mover God.¹⁵ Stoicism’s emphasis on divine immanence offered a way of combining the Platonic transcendence of the ideal world with a view of divinity capable of coming in contact with the world.¹⁶

¹² Diogenes Laertius’s description of this topic includes the notions of voice and sound. In *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.55, he notes that “Voice (φωνή) according to the Stoics is something corporeal...For whatever produces an effect is a body (σῶμα).” He then equates Logos to sound in 7.56. Diogenes appears to be describing, through different terminology, the distinction already noted between *logos endiathetos* and *logos prophorikos*.

¹³ Daniélou questions the specific Stoic origins of the *logos endiathetos* and *prophorikos*. He believes that the absence of such terminology (attribution of these terms to the divine Logos) in Philo and all pre-Christian writers “suggests that it derives rather from a language common to all philosophical schools, without any particular association with Stoicism,” *Gospel Message*, 353-54.

¹⁴ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.148.

¹⁵ Osborn notes that Stoics attempted to balance immanent theology while still speaking of the divine through negative theology: “Stoics were philosophers of the divine existence, of a God who was immanent and yet whose transcendence was maintained by a negative tradition,” *Emergence of Christian Theology*, 115.

¹⁶ Reydam-Schils writes, “Plato’s scheme could be reduced to two components, an active one comprising Being, the Demiurge, and the World Soul, and a passive one, a corollary to Plato’s receptacle. According to our sources, this is precisely what the Stoics did. They took up the challenge of the *Timaeus* and subsequent debates. The active principle in the framework of the Stoic theory is rational, divine and immanent: the divine reason/rationale (λόγος), constantly operating with the universe, structures an unqualified, passive matter into the entities which constitute our world,” *Demiurge and Providence*, 43.

Stoic cosmology also described a distinction between an active principle (the divine) and a passive one (the elemental universe).¹⁷ The Stoics referred to the divine under numerous categories, sometimes as a primordial element such as creative fire (*pur technikon*) or spirit (*pneuma*).¹⁸ At other times the divine was given traditional religious names, such as “Zeus,” and still yet as attributes or even concepts such as “fate.”¹⁹

Apart from a variety of names for the divine, Stoicism made certain attributes of the divine’s nature central to their thinking. No Stoic could conceive of the divine apart from reason and rationality. Diogenes Laertius writes, “The deity, say they [Stoics], is a living being, immortal, rational (λογικόν), perfect or intelligent in happiness, admitting nothing evil [into him], taking providential care of the world and all that therein is, but he is not of human shape.”²⁰ I make special note of the inclusion of rationality in this description of divinity. In Stoic thinking, man’s own *logos* (*endiathetos* and *prophorikos*) modeled the activity of the divine. However, the term *logos* itself appears to be infrequently used as one of the many names of the deity,²¹ even if *logos* (reason) and *physis* (nature) are, according to A.A. Long, “the two fundamental concepts in

¹⁷ These distinctions were intellectually separable though the doctrine of divine all-pervasiveness meant that such separation was an intellectual affair rather than reflective of actuality. See Michael Lapidge, “Stoic Cosmology,” in *The Stoics*, Ed. John M. Rist (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978): 161-86, and White, “Stoic Natural Philosophy,” 124-52.

¹⁸ White, “Stoic Natural Philosophy,” 133-4.

¹⁹ Diogenes Laertius states, “God is one and the same with Reason, Fate, and Zeus; he is also called by many other names,” *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.135-136

²⁰ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. 7.147.

²¹ Reydam-Schils translates a quotation from *S.V.F.*, 1, 160: “Zeno labeled the one who is responsible of the order in nature and who is the *craftsman of the universe* λόγος, also calling him *fate*, *necessity* of things, *god* and *soul* of Jupiter” (Zeno rerum naturae dispositorem atque artificem universitatis λόγον praedicat, quem et fatum et necessitatem rerum et deum et animum Iovis nuncupat), in *Demiurge and Providence*, 43. White notes, “Once one, as a Stoic, has come to understand the essential unity and cohesion of ‘the whole’, it might seem considerably less significant which of the following terms one uses to designate the ‘active aspect’ of that essentially corporeal whole: *pur*, *to hegemonikon*, *pneuma*, *theos*, *nous*, *sperma*, *hexis*, or *tonike kinesis*. Although there are contextual differences, subtle or not so subtle, among these terms, there is a sense in which one is referring to the same (corporeal) thing or ‘stuff’ by all of them; and one is connoting that stuff under its active aspect,” in “Stoic Natural Philosophy,” 136. Stead adds, “With the Stoics, *logos* could stand for the supreme divinity in his capacity as a rational, ordering principle,” *Philosophy*, 139.

Stoicism.”²² This can be explained by the fact that all the names used for divinity by the Stoics presupposed rationality as a characteristic. Therefore, Stoics used *logos* language (and related terms associated with rationality and intelligence) to describe a central attribute of divinity.

Some scholars note that Chrysippus made a special connection between *logos* and *pneuma*.²³ The Stoic identification of divinity as an all-pervasive, variously-named rational principle makes Chrysippus’ connection reasonably clear. The Stoic use of reason, spirit, mind, etc. characterizes the active (divine) principle in the universe. Without a doctrine of an ideal world above and apart from the world of matter, some Stoics embraced *logos* language to describe immanent divine activity, since they rejected divine transcendence.

Like the Stoics, some Middle Platonists made use of similar personal and impersonal names for the divine.²⁴ Middle Platonists, however, linked such concepts to their teachings concerning divine immanence and divine transcendence. In Middle Platonism, the typical formulation of the divine’s contact with the world revolved around intermediaries of one sort or another.²⁵ Plato himself spoke in a hierarchical and tripartite

²² A.A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*. 2nd Ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 120.

²³ Lippidge speaks of the foregoing interconnectedness of terms, stating, “In Chrysippus’ system, *pneuma* becomes equivalent to god and equivalent to divine reason: either *nous* or *logos*,” “Stoic Cosmology, 170. Josiah B. Gould likewise notes that for Chrysippus, *pneuma* has a function “similar, if not identical, to that assigned to the active power, *logos*, or god,” in his *The Philosophy of Chrysippus* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 102. Aetius (1.7.33) also offers a comment to this effect when he states, “the Stoics made god out to be intelligent, a designing fire...and a breath pervading the whole world, which takes on different names owing to the alterations of the matter through which it passes.”

²⁴ Edwards comments that the term Middle Platonism “is a convenient designation for those philosophers who wrote before Plotinus and exhibit an important debt to Plato,” in “Justin’s Logos,” 264. He further points out that most of the philosophers labeled as Middle Platonists probably did not know each other’s works and that we must be wary of attributing the thought of one author to any others.

²⁵ For example in his *De deo Socr.* 1-5, Apuleius speaks of the highest god, visible gods, radiant gods as well as the middle powers called daemons. See also Alcinous’ created gods or daemons who administer the universe according to God’s will and command in *Did.* 15.1-2.

manner about divinity in several important places. This tripartition was sometimes expressed as God, ideas, and matter.²⁶ J. Dillon notes that some Middle Platonists made a distinction between a First God (the Highest) and Second God (the Demiurge or Creator).²⁷ He argues that this connection came about by Middle Platonists who attached Stoic *logos* language to the understanding of the Demiurge.²⁸ Dillon's analysis connects the transcendent Supreme God with the Middle Platonic need for identifying the Demiurge as "closer" to the universe than was logically possible for the Supreme God.

Some of the Middle Platonic works we possess from this period describe the Demiurge in personal language. These sources portray a hierarchy of gods in which the Supreme God wills creation and the second god, of a slightly lesser transcendence creates. It is the lesser degree of the second god's divinity which apparently allowed for

²⁶ Plato spoke of divinity within the hierarchy of the God, the ideas, and matter based upon the concept of greater or lesser Being vs. Becoming (see *Timaeus* 27d5–28a1). All three were seen as eternal by definition since they all shared in Being, yet there existed a hierarchy of Being amongst them which indicated God as the highest divinity. All things (including man) could claim a relationship with the divine in so far as man reflected or participated in Being (typically through expressions about the mind). Yet to the extent that man was not eternal, he was categorized as involved with the flux of the Becoming world and therefore not divine and not eternal. A version of such theology is given by Varro, a student of Antiochus of Ascalon, "God is the soul of the universe, and this universe is God. But just as a wise man, though consisting of body and mind, is called wise because of his mind, so the universe is called God because of its mind, though it likewise consists of mind and body," quoted in Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 90. For comments about the Gnostic evaluation of the eternal forms/models in contrast to the Middle Platonic association of the forms as the eternal thoughts of the Creator, see E. P. Meirjering, "Irenaeus' Relation to Philosophy in the Light of His Concept of Free Will," in *God Being History* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1975), 20.

²⁷ Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 48. Meirjering, "Irenaeus' Relation to Philosophy," 19–30, sees a shift in Middle Platonic thinking with the understanding that the ideas are the eternal thoughts of the Creator.

²⁸ Dillon's contention that Middle Platonists took over Stoic Logos language and thus added a personalized dimension to the Creator has not always been held. See for example Evans, who writes, "But they [Christian writers] can hardly have been unaware that λόγος in the philosophers is neither speech nor reason, far less a divine person (though they designate it 'god'—for god to them is depersonalized), but is little more than mathematical ratio," *Tertullian's Treatise*, 32. This limited portrayal of Logos language is not accurate according to the majority of scholars.

the act of creating the world and thus engaging with the world of Becoming.²⁹ J. R.

Lyman explains,

Taking on the dynamism of Stoic cosmology, Middle Platonists affirmed divine purpose and power in the world, yet within the definitions of the transcendent and rational nature of the divine. Activity itself was thus increasingly relegated to the second principle, described as word (λόγος) or mind (νοῦς), in order to protect the transcendence and simplicity of the first principle.³⁰

Some Middle Platonists held to the idealism of a transcendent world, but allowed for an avenue of divine contact with the world through the creator god, as well as intermediaries. This creator god and the intermediaries were still understood as gods, but were seen as possessing a lesser degree of divinity, thus enabling them to have contact with the universe.

Some scholars see the Platonic *Second Epistle* as the basis for a Middle Platonic association between some of the language related to the *logos* in Stoicism and the second god.³¹ The *Second Epistle* alludes to the divine tripartition described above: “The matter stands thus: Related to the King of All are all things, and for his sake they are, and of all things fair He is the cause. And related to the Second are the second things; and related

²⁹ See Hans Dörrie, “*Formula Analogiae*: An exploration of a Theme in Hellenistic and Imperial Platonism,” in *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought*. Ed. by H. J. Blumentahl and R. A. Markus (London: Variorum Publications LTD, 1981), 33-4, for comments on the analogy between Being/Becoming and knowledge/faith in *Timaeus* 29c and *Republic* 6.509d, 6.510a, and 7.534a.

³⁰ J. Rebecca Lyman. *Christology and Cosmology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 14.

³¹ Although scholarship agrees that this letter is spurious, ancient philosophers, including Plotinus, treated it as genuine. See Plotinus, *Enneids* V.1.8.1-10. Steven K. Strange, states, “Given the close connection of fragment 221F with the beginning of *Ennead* V.1.8, we may suspect that fragment 222F too is connected with the same *Ennead* chapter, where Plotinus cites (*Enn.* V. 1.8,1-4) the same passage of the Pseudo-Platonic *Epistle II* concerning the ‘Three Kings’ (312e) that Porphyry quotes in 222F. However, Porphyry unlike Plotinus quotes Plato’s text directly rather than paraphrasing (and does so fairly accurately, with only minor variation from our received text of the *Epistle*) and makes clear what Plotinus does not, that the three kings are the same as the ‘three gods’ of Numenius of Apamea, whereas Plotinus picks out only a few key phrases from the *Epistle*,” in “Porphyry and Plotinus’ Metaphysics,” in G. Karamanolis and A. Sheppard, eds., *Studies on Porphyry, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplementary Volume 98* (2007), 26.

to the Third the third.”³² Some authors in the ancient world apparently viewed this passage as referring to three gods. According to Proclus’ account, Numenius of Apameia, a Platonic and Pythagorean philosopher of the 2nd century A.D., developed a tripartition of the divine, with the first two being personalized. Concerning Numenius’ doctrines, Proclus writes: “Numenius proclaims three gods, calling the first ‘Father,’ the second ‘Creator,’ and the third ‘Creation;’ for the cosmos, according to him, is the third god. So, according to him, the Demiurge is double, being both the first god and the second, and the third god is the object of his demiurgic activity.”³³ A. Droge suggests that Numenius’ doctrine on this count was based on the *Second Epistle*, since Numenius also quotes another portion of this epistle.³⁴

If Proclus is correct, then Numenius advocated three gods to address the topics of divine transcendence and immanence. The transcendent Supreme God creates by way of the second god, the Demiurge, while divine immanence is held through the doctrine that the world itself is a god and that the Demiurge has contact with it. As noted above, the Stoics did not need a link between *logos* language and divine, demiurgic activity because of the central tenet of divine, corporeal immanence. Numenius’ theology takes the demiurgic functions found within Stoic Logos theology as indicative of the functions of the first and second god. Although both gods share a demiurgic role, the inherent

³² *Plato*, vol. 7 Loeb. Trans. R. G. Bury. Rev. 1952 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), 411. Justin, *I Apol.* 60, also refers to part of this passage: “For he [Plato] gives the second place to the logos who is with God, who, he said, was placed *Chi-wise* in the universe, and the third to the Spirit who was said to be borne over the water, saying, ‘And the third around the third.’” Justin argues that all similarities found in philosophy to the mysteries of Christianity derive from imitation and/or corruption of the scriptures.

³³ Frag. 21, Translated in Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 366-367.

³⁴ Arthur J. Droge, “Justin Martyr and the Restoration of Philosophy,” *CH* 56 (1987), 310. Numenius quotes the *Second Epistle* 312e in Fragment 24.

hierarchy reveals the traces of a tripartition of divinity according to Academic tradition.

Numenius' contribution appears to be the personalization of the second god.

Because few Middle Platonic sources have survived, it is difficult to determine whether Numenius' doctrines were unique. However, another example makes an explicit connection between the *logos* and a divine figure. Dillon takes note of several elements in Plutarch's *On Isis and Osiris* which appear to make a connection between Hermes and the *logos*.³⁵ Justin also acknowledges the connection in philosophical works, when he states:

Moreover, the Son of God called Jesus, even if only a man by ordinary generation, yet, on account of His wisdom, is worthy to be called the Son of God; for all writers call God the Father of men and gods. And if we assert that the Word of God was born of God in a peculiar manner, different from ordinary generation, let this, as said above, be no extraordinary thing to you, who say that Mercury is the angelic word of God. [*I Apol.* 22]³⁶

Justin's comments demonstrate that the broader religious environment accepted a hypostasized portrayal of the *logos* figure (in this case as Hermes).

R. M. Price criticizes Dillon's analysis as "seriously misleading." He argues that Dillon cannot present much evidence for an emphasis on the *logos* found within Middle

³⁵ John Dillon, "Logos and Trinity: Patterns of Platonist Influence on Early Christianity," in *The Philosophy in Christianity*, Ed. Godfrey Vesey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1-13. Dillon states, "In fact, it is another figure, Hermes (Thoth), whom Plutarch here (373B) presents as Logos, but this should not disturb us unduly, I think, as the role of Thoth as witness in the trial of Horus (the physical world) of illegitimacy is an integral part of the Egyptian myth, and Thoth, *qua* Hermes, is traditionally allegorized as the Logos of God," "Logos and Trinity," 4. Cf. John Gwyn Griffiths who offers a different interpretation: "Plutarch has just stated that the father (Osiris) is himself the Logos. When he uses the same word of Hermes, it cannot have precisely the same meaning. In the former case there is every reason to believe that he is using the term in the sense of the Word or Wisdom of God as a creative principle, a usage which began at Alexandria and is best known for its occurrence in the Gospel of John. In 62, 376C ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ νοῦς καὶ λόγος is a clear instance of this sense. Hermes, however, will denote reason in the more general sense of the world," in *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*. Ed. with Intro., Trans., and Comm. By J. Gwyn Griffiths (Cambridge: University of Wales Press, 1970), 505.

³⁶ Mercury is the Roman equivalent of the Greek deity, Hermes. Hippolytus also identifies the Logos with Mercury in *Ref.* 4.48: "And that the lyre is a musical instrument fashioned by Logos while still altogether an infant, and that Logos is the same as he who is denominated Mercury among the Greeks." He claims that the Naassene's made the same connection (*Ref.* 5.2).

Platonism.³⁷ Dillon acknowledges the limitations of the evidence. After commenting on Plutarch, Dillon states, “Logos-theology, then, has at least a foothold in Platonism in the Middle Platonic period, but it is not, perhaps, the dominant pattern.”³⁸ Though perhaps not dominant, several examples during the period up to the 3rd century A.D. contain references to the mind, intelligence, and/or reason of god functioning as a personality.³⁹ For this reason, most scholars continue to reflect a judgment similar to Dillon’s and others who have made similar arguments. For example, Goodenough, who wrote before Dillon, made the same point,

The Logos then in all circles but the Stoic, and often apparently even in Stoicism, was a link of some kind which connected a transcendent Absolute with the world and humanity. Logos came into general popularity because of the wide-spread desire to conceive of God as transcendent and yet immanent at the same time.⁴⁰

In all of the examples discussed above, the Logos, whether as a principle or a personal figure, functions as something of an intermediary between the supreme God and the creation.

Philo

Philo’s writings demonstrate a thorough education in both pagan philosophic thought and Jewish exegetical training, as well as a particular interest in *logos* language. Wolfson, for example, pointed to numerous connections between Philo’s thought and

³⁷ R. M. Price, “‘Hellenization’ and Logos Doctrine in Justin Martyr,” *VC* 42 (1988), 21 n. 12.

³⁸ Dillon, “Logos and Trinity,” 5.

³⁹ Lyman highlights the work of Dörrie, who effectively describes both the connection of Word to Mind as well as the eventual emphasis on the latter in the Neoplatonic period. She writes, “Dörrie has described this change as a transition from ‘Logos-Religion’ to ‘Nous-Theologie’; the activity of God in the world was no longer seen to reveal the divine essence, so connection with the divine was possible only through enlightenment,” in *Christology and Cosmology*, 17, citing Dörrie, “‘Logos-Religion? Oder Nous-Theologie?’” in *Kephalaion*, Eds. J. Mansfeld and L. M. de Rijk (Assen, 1975): 115-136.

⁴⁰ Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 139.

contemporary Hellenistic philosophy, especially Logos theology.⁴¹ Other scholars from the middle of the 20th century concluded that Philo derived his Logos theology from his Jewish background. R. Holte, for example, produced compelling evidence which demonstrates that Philo's ideas about the *logos* are consistent with a common pool of rabbinic exegetical speculations from the same period.⁴² Taken as a whole, no group of scholars has been able to conclusively exclude the probability that both philosophical and Jewish sources influenced Philo's ideas about Logos theology.

As noted above, some Middle Platonists connected Logos theology either to the Demiurge or to demiurgic activity.⁴³ An example of this teaching in Philo's work comes from *De opificio mundi* 5.20,

As therefore the city, when previously shadowed out in the mind of the man of architectural skill had no external place, but was stamped solely in the mind of the workman, so in the same manner neither can the world which existed in ideas have had any other local position except the divine reason [*logos*] which made them.⁴⁴

The *logos* in this case refers to a kind of personified power of God (the workman).⁴⁵

According to this idea, God plans and executes demiurgic activity with His *logos*.

Connected to the demiurgic activity of the *logos* is Philo's determination that the

⁴¹ Harry Austryn Wolfson. *Philo*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982 originally 1947).

⁴² Ragnar Holte, "Logos Spermatikos: Christianity and Ancient Philosophy according to St. Justin's Apologies," Trans. by Tina Pierce. *ST* 12 (1958): 125. Holte depends on K. Schubert's, "Einige Beobachtungen zum Verständnis des Logosbegriffes im früh rabbinischen Schrifttum," *Judaica* 9 (Zürich, 1953), which compares Philonic and rabbinic exegesis.

⁴³ Cf. Wolfson who rejects the idea that Philo uses the *logos* as an intermediate, creating figure. Comparing Philo's use of Logos to the figure of Wisdom in the Wisdom of Solomon, Wolfson states, "The conclusion we are forced to reach is that Philo had neither a logical nor a historical reason to look for intermediaries, and if his Logos and powers and ideas are in some respects employed by God as intermediaries they are selected by Him for that task not because of the need to bridge some imaginary gulf between Him and the world, but rather, as Philo himself suggests, for the purpose of setting various examples of right conduct to men," *Philo (I)*, 289.

⁴⁴ See also *De opificio mundi* 10.36 and 48.139; *Legum allegoriae* 3:31.96.

⁴⁵ See also Philo's *De cherubim* 1.27-28 in which the *logos* is related to the power of God.

incomprehensible God is known through His works. This makes the activities of the *logos* essential to knowledge about God.⁴⁶

In addition to the use of *logos* as a creative power, Philo also refers to it in terms of divine sonship. In *De confusione linguarum* 63, Philo states, “For the Father of the universe has caused him to spring up as the eldest son, whom, in another passage, he [Moses] calls the first-born; and he who is thus born, imitating the ways of his father, has formed such and such species, looking to his archetypal patterns.”⁴⁷ A. Grillmeier concludes, “Philo’s Logos speculation is the most far-reaching attempt at the hypostatization of Wisdom (or of the Logos) within the Hebrew tradition.”⁴⁸ And yet, Philo may not to have been alone in personalizing the *logos* in terms of sonship. A comment by Origen may also suggest that Celsus, the Middle Platonic philosopher, spoke in a similar way.⁴⁹ Such evidence proves only that Christianity developed in an intellectual environment which provided examples of a connection between a personalized divine *logos* (sometimes with overtones of divine sonship) and demiurgic activity. Scholars also continue to weigh in on the possible influence which Philo’s writings had on the Gospel of John⁵⁰ as well as Word Christology in general.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Young writes, “Philo had argued that God was incomprehensible in his essence, and only known indirectly through his works; this suggests a different sense of the word ‘incomprehensible,’” “God of the Greeks,” 57.

⁴⁷ See Wolfson’s, *Philo (I)*, chapter 4 for a description of this usage.

⁴⁸ Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*. Translated by John Bowden. Revised 2nd Edition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 108.

⁴⁹ Origen states in *Cels.* 2.31, “If according to your doctrine the Word is really the Son of God then we agree with you.”

⁵⁰ Holte notes, “Although it is agreed that St. John’s choice of the Logos conception is, to a great extent, due to its significance in different contemporary philosophical and religious systems, the content of the term is nowadays primarily explained from the Old Testament background, the rabbinic exegesis, and their speculations on Word, Law, and Wisdom particularly,” in “Logos Spermatikos,” 124.

⁵¹ Daniélou states, “It does not seem that Philo himself actually influenced the Apologists, but he supplies yet another indication that theories concerning the relation of God to the cosmos were very much a living issue in the second century,” *Gospel Message*, 346.

Justin

The debate over the sources of Justin's Word Christology is as wide-ranging in opinion as that over the sources of Philo's Logos theology.⁵² E. Evans called it "perverse ingenuity" to look for Greek sources behind Justin's Word Christology.⁵³ L. W. Barnard disagreed, saying that Justin "is more influenced by prevailing philosophical speculation than the writer of the Fourth Gospel."⁵⁴ H. B. Timothy offered specific responses to, and a rejection of, several of Evans' points.⁵⁵ R. M. Price challenged the suggestion of philosophic influence, stating, "The easy and frequent use of 'Logos' as a title of the Son came to Justin not from Greek philosophy but from the constant mention of the 'word of God' in the Old Testament, as transmitted to him in the Greek of the Septuagint and developed by such Jewish biblical commentators as Philo."⁵⁶ R. M. Grant came to a similar conclusion as Price, though he thinks Justin did not know Philo.⁵⁷ Barnard concluded, "It would be fair to say that there is a wide divergence of opinion among scholars on this question."⁵⁸ The basis of the foregoing debate arises out of Justin's possible exposure to nearly all the sources of Logos theology.⁵⁹

⁵² When referring to the Christian version of this theology, I now move from using Logos theology to Word Christology. In the case of the Christian authors I treat, these authors viewed the pre-Incarnate Word and Jesus Christ as a single subject. Therefore, no Logos theology apart from Christology, strictly speaking, exists for them.

⁵³ Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise*, 33.

⁵⁴ Barnard, *Justin Martyr*, 91.

⁵⁵ H. B. Timothy, *The Early Christian Apologists and Greek Philosophy: exemplified by Irenaeus, Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria* (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1973), 19-22.

⁵⁶ Price, "Hellenization," 20.

⁵⁷ Robert M. Grant writes, "His [Justin's] doctrine of the Logos was based on a doctrine of Sophia developed within Hellenistic Judaism but not taken directly from Philo of Alexandria," in *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 61.

⁵⁸ Barnard, *Justin Martyr*, 91. Though Goodenough presented numerous examples of Justin's dependence upon Philo, Barnard has answered with a number of convincing objections. See Barnard, *Justin Martyr*, 92-96.

⁵⁹ In *Dial. 2*, Justin claims training or contact with Stoicism, Aristotelianism, Pythagoreanism, and Platonism. His theology is also entrenched in an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures and his Samaritan

Justin is one of the first writers to extensively describe Jesus within a Word Christology framework.⁶⁰ He writes, “Jesus Christ is the only proper Son who has been begotten by God, being His Word and first-begotten, and power; and, becoming man according to His will, He taught us these things for the conversion and restoration of the human race.”⁶¹ I will discuss three topics associated with the contents of this passage. The first will address the role of the Father’s will in bringing forth the Word, and the second will treat Justin’s understanding of the relationship of the Word as the Father’s only-begotten Word. The third topic concerns the link Justin makes between “restoration” and “creation” through the Word. In Justin’s theology, both of these ideas (creation and restoration) relate to his understanding that the Word is God’s immanent presence while the Father remains transcendent.⁶²

The first and second topics, the will of God in generating the Word and the manner by which the Word is of God, are closely connected. Addressing one naturally brings up the need to address the other. I begin with Justin’s repeated assertions that the Word originates from the will of the Father. Wolfson identifies Justin as holding a Two-stage theory of the Logos.⁶³ By this Wolfson means that Justin follows Philo and others in a specific identification of the Logos existing in the Father and then coming forth from

origins open up the likely possibility that he knew Jewish exegetical traditions. Justin’s contact with or influence by Philo has largely been rejected. See Leslie W. Barnard, “The Logos Theology of St. Justin Martyr,” *DRev* 89 (1971): 136-37.

⁶⁰ For a brief survey of the development of the Logos doctrine in the writings of the Apologists, see Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 108-113.

⁶¹ *Apol.* 1.23. καὶ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς μόνος ἰδίως υἱὸς τῷ θεῷ γεγέννηται, λόγος αὐτοῦ ὑπάρχων καὶ πρωτότοκος καὶ δύναμις, καὶ τῇ βουλῇ αὐτοῦ γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος ταῦτα ἡμᾶς ἐδίδαξεν ἐπ’ ἀλλαγῇ καὶ ἐπαναγωγῇ τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου γένους.

⁶² Justin identifies Jesus Christ as the divine Word who creates, appears to man prior to the Incarnation, and also enacts the Father’s will to redeem man through the Incarnation. Daniélou considered Justin to be one of the Apologists, thus leading him to, in my opinion, downplay this topic. He writes, “Furthermore, in their treatment of this divine activity in the world the emphasis was more on its cosmological than on its soteriological aspect,” *Gospel Message*, 345.

⁶³ Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 192-93.

out of the Father.⁶⁴ As will be noted later, Two-stage theories often reject a personal distinction of the Word in the first stage, whereas a Single-stage model usually attempts to describe an eternal generation of the Word from the Father, and thus an eternal distinction.

Justin teaches that Jesus Christ is the second God who enacts God's will throughout all of history. I make this point because Justin names the Word prior to the Incarnation often as Christ and at least once as Jesus.⁶⁵ The obvious issue is the temporal one: Justin employs the name Jesus and the title Christ to the pre-incarnate Word. His willingness to use Jesus, the Word, and Christ interchangeably demonstrates his understanding that all three names designate one and the same person.⁶⁶ In fact, all the names and titles attributable to the Son come directly from the will of the Father. Justin sees the titles, Glory of the Lord, Son, Wisdom, Angel, God, Lord, Word, Commander-in-chief as belonging to the Son. "He can justly lay claim to all these titles," Justin asserts, "from the fact that He performs the Father's will and also that He was begotten

⁶⁴ For example, see 2 *Apol.* 6: "Before the works of creation it both was with the Father and was begotten." Barnes sums up this concept with the following: "'Two-stage' Logos theology builds from the Stoic distinction between the interior word in the mind and the word expressed in speech. In the Christian adaptation of this model, the Word exists within God, and at the moment of creation, when God speaks ('Let there be light'), the Word takes on a distinct existence. This theology provides for continuity of nature between Father and Word, describes the generation of the Word, and asserts the eternal existence of the Word, though without supporting an eternal *distinct* existence. It is the taught by all the Apologists, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian," "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 70 n. 10. See also Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 345-386.

⁶⁵ Goodenough notes that Justin does this throughout *Dial.*, such as *Dial.* 113.4 in which Justin identifies Jesus as the subject of the theophanies. See Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 168-173. Justin also speaks about Christ as the subject of the theophanies in 1 *Apol.* 62.3. We can compare this to *Prax.* 12, in which Tertullian names Christ as the creator of the world.

⁶⁶ I use person here not in the later technical sense of Trinitarian theology but simply to designate the single subjectivity underlying Justin's names for the Son of God. Edwards writes, "Justin harps on the interpenetration of the Savior and his Word," "Justin's Logos," 92. Cf. Mortley, *From Word to Silence* (2), 35, who suggests that Justin treated God and Christ as referring to the mystery of the divine nature.

by an act of the Father's will."⁶⁷ Justin equates the will of the Father with the Son's begotten nature as well as with the Son acting on the Father's will.

In regard to the two stages of the Logos, Justin unites the creation of the world with the Father's begetting of the Son. Proverbs 8 provides the justification for this connection, and it includes the very important passage: "The Lord begot Me in the beginning of His ways for His works. I was set up from eternity, before He made the earth, and before He made the depths...Before all the hills, He begets Me."⁶⁸ This portion of Proverbs, specifically 8.22, reappears frequently in the next several centuries of Christological debates. Goodenough notes, "...Justin says the Logos is Son of God because God wills it. Indeed all of the glory and power which the Logos possesses is His, not by His own right but by the will of the Father."⁶⁹ God the Father wills to beget the Logos, to whom the Father bestows glory and power, in order for the Word to act as an agent of creation.

Although Justin emphasizes the Father's will in establishing the Word as a second God, he does not outright suggest the Son's eternality. Justin puts the singularity of the eternal Father at the forefront of his theology. It is arguable that Justin teaches the shared and common nature of the Father and the Son (i.e. "fire from fire"), while also holding to a temporal subordination of the Son to the Father.

Justin uses two primary metaphors for explaining the manner by which the Son comes from the Father, the second topic in this section. He compares the Father

⁶⁷ *Dial.* 61.

⁶⁸ Proverbs 8:22-25. See also *Dial.* 62 which makes mention of this passage: "But this Offspring, who was truly begotten of the Father, was with the Father and the Father talked with Him before all creation, as the Scripture through Solomon clearly showed us, saying that this Son, who is called Wisdom by Solomon, was begotten both as a beginning before all His works, and as His Offspring."

⁶⁹ Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 158.

begetting the Word to the sun and its light and also a fire lighting another fire. He uses the first of these metaphors in *Dial.* 128.3-4 when he writes that the Scriptures,

“call Him the Word, because He carries tidings from the Father, just as they say that the light of the sun on earth is indivisible and inseparable from the sun in the heavens; as when it sinks, the light sinks along with it; so the Father, when He chooses, say they, causes His power (δύναμιν) to spring forth, and when He chooses, He makes it return to Himself.”

The act of the Father choosing to send forth His power relates to the subject of God’s will mentioned above.⁷⁰ In addition, this passage also demonstrates that Justin believes that God’s will to send forth the Word can be just as readily associated with the Father’s will to return that power to Himself. Justin’s metaphor of the sun and its light establishes the will of the Father as omnipotent, even in relation to the Son. Furthermore, it is evident that the Son’s glory and power are manifested by his obedience to perform the Father’s will.

Justin also makes it clear that the Father can will to offer any creature permanent existence. Jews, Christians, and some Platonists shared the speculation that God can will immortality for mortal things and creatures.⁷¹ Jews, including Trypho,⁷² and Christians embraced such a notion mostly because Scripture guaranteed eternal life to some.⁷³ On the other hand, some Academic philosophers held to this possibility even under a barrage

⁷⁰ Recall also Justin’s use of power and spirit in *1 Apol.* 33, which I cited in chapter 2.

⁷¹ Setaioli addresses this topic as it relates to Seneca’s philosophy, noting, “The concept of permanence guaranteed not by inborn immortality but by the assistance of god comes from a famous passage of Plato’s *Timaeus*, where the demiurge tells the subordinate gods he has just created: ‘due to the fact that you have been born you are not immortal nor totally exempt from dissolution; however, you shall not be dissolved nor die, because my will is for you a stronger and more solid bond than those with which you were bound at your birth’ [41B],” “Seneca and the Divine,” 344.

⁷² Justin states, “For God, wishing both angels and men, who were endowed with freewill, and at their own disposal, to do whatever He had strengthened each to do, made them so, that if they chose the things acceptable to Himself, He would keep them free from death and from punishment,” *Dial.* 88. Trypho accepts the content of Justin’s comments in *Dial.* 89 without raising any objections.

⁷³ E.g. John 10:27-30, 11:25-26, 14:1-31, 1 Cor. 15:54-57, 1 John 5:11-12.

of ridicule from Stoics and Aristotelians.⁷⁴ Justin suggests, for example, that some of the angels have been made and are never reduced in their power. Furthermore, according to Justin, the Son is to be especially attributed with immortality.

Justin's second metaphor implies that while the Word comes from the will of God, it also shares a kind of special equality with the Father not found among other immortal beings. Justin states:

When I asserted that this power was begotten from the Father, by His power and will, but not by abscission, as if the essence of the Father were divided; as all other things partitioned and divided are not the same after as before they were divided: and, for the sake of example, I took the case of fires kindled from a fire, which we see to be distinct from it, and yet that from which many can be kindled is by no means made less, but remains the same. [*Dial.* 128]⁷⁵

Although Justin identifies a second subject as God, he is less concerned with a detailed investigation into the shared nature of the Father and Son, and more interested in avoiding any outright classification of total equality. For this reason Goodenough takes note of the fact that “the Logos, in passage after passage is represented as subordinate to the Father.”⁷⁶ But Goodenough also thinks that Justin attempts to balance the metaphors of the sun and the fire in order to safeguard belief that the Son is rightfully identified as

⁷⁴ The references to a temporal creation in Plato's *Timaeus* are the root of this issue. See Reydam-Schils, *Demiurge and Providence*, 18 and 38. Rowan Williams summarizes the discussion and dispute beginning with Aristotle's immediate attacks in *De caelo* for what he understood as the affirmation that the world had a beginning but would exist eternally in his *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 181-198. He notes, “The force of Aristotle's case is that he appears to demonstrate the *logical* impossibility of God's creating a world that has a beginning but no end, and this demonstration was generally assumed to be valid by the majority of later philosophers in antiquity,” 183. Most Platonists agreed with Aristotle that Plato's account was a “pedagogic myth,” though a small group “assumed that Plato meant more or less what he said, *Idem*. This group included later Middle Platonic philosophers such as Alcinous who wrote, “By [God's] will this universe admits of no dissolution,” *Did.* 15.2. It is of course with this group, which included Plutarch and Atticus, that Christians and Jews could find common ground.

⁷⁵ See also *Dial.* 6.

⁷⁶ Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 155.

God.⁷⁷ Justin's metaphors provide one form of argument for his claims that the Logos is God. The Logos is uniquely begotten of the Father and uniquely does the will of the Father, not the least of which includes the activities of creation and redemption.

I turn now to the third topic in this section. Justin's treatment of the Word as the agent of redemption begins with his identification of the Word as the agent of creation.⁷⁸

After quoting Genesis 1:1-3, Justin states, "So that both Plato and they who agree with him, and we ourselves, have learned, and you also can be convinced, that by the word of God the whole world was made out of the substance⁷⁹ spoken of before by Moses."⁸⁰

Justin notes that the creative activity of the Word is common property to the intellectual world of philosophers.⁸¹ As seen above, Philo's writings also embraced this idea.

However, when Justin historicized the Word through the Incarnation as the man Jesus he

⁷⁷ Goodenough also points to Philo's *De gigantes* 24-25 where the same analogies are used. Goodenough believes Justin emphasizes these themes without laying a greater stress on emanation language because this was a centerpiece of Gnostic theology. He compares Justin's work to that of Irenaeus, who dissects and attacks these Gnostic positions in *Haer.* 2.13. Whether Goodenough overstates the influence of Gnostic fears into Justin's choice to avoid emanation language seems debatable. See Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 150-52.

⁷⁸ Edwards believes that Justin's writings should be read with a Rabbinic principle in mind, namely "that the meaning of a term in any context may be present in all the others," in "Justin's Logos," 268. Edwards understands references to "Word" and "Wisdom" as being "polysemic symbol[s]," *Ibid.* 270. He acknowledges that Justin sometimes speaks of the Word in ways which are impersonal, personal, and a combination of these. See 269 for examples.

⁷⁹ In Barnard's notes to his edition of Justin's Apologies, he notes that Justin appears to accept no discrepancy between Plato's eternal, formless matter and the text of Genesis. He concludes, "A creation *ex nihilo* does not come within his purview," in Justin Martyr, *The First and Second Apologies*, Trans. with intro. and notes by Leslie William Barnard (New York: Paulist, 1997), 168-169 n. 354.

⁸⁰ *I Apol.* 59. See also *I Apol.* 20 in which Justin offers several parallels between Christian teaching and the philosophical schools' positions. Goodenough rejected the interpretation which saw the Logos as personally acting on God's directive to create. See Goodenough, *Theology of Justin Martyr*, 165-166. But Daniélou represents the majority opinion. He cites *2 Apol.* 6 and states, "In Justin this cosmological function of the Son of God as creator and organizer of the universe is so preponderant that he even makes it one of the connotations of the title 'Christ,'" *Gospel Message*, 347.

⁸¹ See Droge for a discussion of the historical and theological implications of Justin's belief that Plato had read Moses, "Justin Martyr," 307-316. Our concern however is not how Justin arrived at this position, but the fact that he believed there were similarities among Jews, pagans, and Christians. Theophilus makes a similar, though less emphatic and developed, point in *Autol.* 2.37. See also *Autol.* 2.30 for Theophilus' comment that the ancient historians and poets were in error and can not be trusted.

shocked the Jews⁸² and challenged the philosophical presuppositions of educated pagans.⁸³

Justin makes Jesus the linchpin of all divine activity on earth. Since Justin is speaking to Jews in the *Dial.*, he attempts to show that the Old Testament's prophecies only make sense when Jesus is seen as the center of the Scriptures and the fulfillment of God's plans. Jesus is the promised Messiah,⁸⁴ but He is also God and not simply an anointed man.⁸⁵ Justin anchors his theology of divine immanence on the same aspects of topological theology presented in chapter 4. For example, Justin says, "For, the Ineffable Father and Lord of all neither comes to any place, nor walks, nor sleeps, nor arises, but always remains in His place, wherever it may be, acutely seeing and hearing, not with eyes or ears, but with a power beyond description."⁸⁶ His understanding of divine

⁸² Justin acknowledges this regarding the Jews when Trypho declares: "For you have blasphemed many times in your attempt to convince us that this crucified man was with Moses and Aaron, and spoke with them in the pillar of the cloud; that He became man, was crucified, and ascended into Heaven, and will return again to this earth; and that He should be worshipped," *Dial.* 38. Justin responds that the life of Jesus does not contradict the nature of God.

⁸³ One can make the case that those educated pagans who ridiculed Christianity saw in it something of a retreat to the unsophisticated pagan pantheism which was no longer religiously tolerable to the elites. For several centuries, beginning with the rise of the Stoics, attempts had been made to allegorize the Homeric stories of the ancient gods who were seen, at least philosophically, as falling far short of intellectual religious comprehension. Hippolytus speaks about "Gnostic" groups (especially the Naassenes) who singled out Homer for his prophetic importance (*Ref.* 5.3). Cicero's *Nat. d.* is especially instructive for an appreciation of the acceptable attributes and activities of the gods. Such attributes included the rejection of the possibility of an incarnation as well as the unbecoming association of a god participating in daily life as Jesus had done. In fact, in *1 Apol.* 21, 22, and 46 Justin specifically makes the dual case, first, that Jesus can appear to be much like one of the sons of Jupiter or one of the other gods in regard to a manifestation in the world, and second, that such manifestations in pagan religions demonstrate the depravity, ungodliness, and thus the falsity of the gods in traditional religion. See Barnard's "Logos Theology," 133 and Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise*, 32.

⁸⁴ *Dial.* 48-49.

⁸⁵ *Dial.* 49-50; 55. Lyman writes, "To Trypho, Justin claimed that even if one is unable to prove that Jesus existed eternally, he is undoubtedly the foretold Messiah for he submitted to the Father's will. The pattern of the Son's action, whether as cosmic Logos appearing for the Father to the patriarchs of the Hebrew Scriptures or as the incarnate Jesus obedient to God's command, was therefore the same," *Christology and Cosmology*, 24-5.

⁸⁶ *Dial.* 127. See Ps.-Aristotle who uses similar language in *Mund.* 6: "For God is indeed the preserver of all things and the creator of everything in this cosmos however it is brought to fruition; but he does not take upon himself the toil of a creature that works and labours for itself, but uses an indefatigable

immanence begins with the assertion that the Father cannot be the divine figure who reveals Himself in a particular place.

When it comes to the theophanies, Justin's twofold approach includes 1) denying the Jews the possibility that the Father became present on earth, while simultaneously 2) affirming that the Scriptures declare God's presence. Justin therefore speaks of the theophanies as manifestations of the Word rather than manifestations of the Father.⁸⁷ For example, in response to Trypho's suggestion that the burning bush was an episode involving an angel and the voice of God, Justin replies, "Thus, even if there were two persons, as you claim, an Angel and God, yet no one with even the slightest intelligence would dare to assert that the Creator and Father of all things left His super-celestial realms to make Himself visible in a little spot on earth."⁸⁸ Justin's understanding of the Father's nature demands a necessary transcendence from the world.⁸⁹ He expresses this transcendence in part through topological theology. In order to discuss God's immanence, Justin turns to the theological proposition that the Father begets the Word in order to create the world, appear in it, and then redeem it.⁹⁰

I conclude this section by making one point about the role Justin assigns to the Spirit. Earlier, I described 'spirit' as enjoying the near universal acceptance of naming

power, by means of which he controls even things that seem a great way off. God has his home in the highest and first place..."

⁸⁷ Osborn observes, "Justin's account of the divine theophanies is important for both Judaism and Christianity, presenting a common front against the super-celestial tendencies of Gnosticism," *Emergence of Christian Theology*, 184. Philippe Henne, "Pour Justin, Jésus est-il un autre dieu?" *RSPT* 81 (1997): 57-68, argues that Justin uses the theophanies in order to declare a second, distinct divine figure along with the transcendent Father.

⁸⁸ *Dial.* 60. Theophanic examples were a point of discussion within both Judaism and philosophy in general. Justin's comments regarding the ultimate God would in this case match the tendency within Judaism and Platonism to affirm a transcendent God. See also *Dial.* 56 and 127.

⁸⁹ Mortley, *From Word to Silence* (2), 34.

⁹⁰ Grillmeier connects "the Word made flesh with the pre-existent Logos, who is also the mediator of creation and revelation," *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 90. See also Carl Andresen, *Logos und Nomos* (Berlin: 1955), 312-44 as well as his "Justin und der mittlere Platonismus," *ZAW* 44 (1952/53): 157-95, for an extended analysis of Justin's connection to Middle Platonism.

the divine nature or specifically the divine substance among some philosophers and Jews. The philosophical schools' doctrines concerning the questions of divine transcendence and immanence depended in part on the manner by which spirit supposedly interacted with the world.⁹¹ In chapter 2, I pointed to one instance in which Justin seems to have associated the Word with the term "spirit" in order to speak about immanence.⁹² Most often, Justin's references to "spirit" or "Holy Spirit" refer to either created spirits, such as angels, or the agent who evokes or provides prophetic utterances. He repeatedly emphasizes the freedom of men and angels to follow God's command and therefore accept the eternal life which God is able to freely bestow.⁹³ God's gift of eternal life to man, or man's spirit, follows from man's choice of obedience. Therefore, Justin's understanding of God's immanence in the world depends upon the Word and the Holy Spirit as agents of His will. This makes the transcendence of the Father a central aspect of his theology.

Theophilus

In chapter 2, I presented Theophilus' *Autol.* as an important source for negative theology. Like Justin, Theophilus distinguishes the Word from the Father in the theophanies because of the Father's transcendent nature. Theophilus, for example, takes up the theophany in Genesis 3 in which God speaks to Adam and walks in the Garden.

Theophilus writes,

⁹¹ The Stoic use of the all-pervading *pneuma* certainly could make a greater claim to divine immanence over the Middle Platonic theories of divine, albeit spiritual, intermediaries who were responsible for direct contact with the world.

⁹² One notable example is found in *1 Apol.* 33 in which Justin states, "It is wrong, therefore, to understand the Spirit and the power of God as anything else than the Word, who is also the first-born of God, as the foresaid prophet Moses declared; and it was this which, when it came upon the virgin and overshadowed her, caused her to conceive, not by intercourse, but by power."

⁹³ See especially *1 Apol.* 10.

But his Logos, through whom he made all things, who is his Power and Wisdom, assuming the role of the Father and Lord of the universe, was present in paradise in the role of God and conversed with Adam. For the divine scripture itself teaches us that Adam said that he ‘heard the voice’. What is the ‘voice’ but the Logos of God, who is also his Son? (*Autol.* 2.22).

Like Justin, Theophilus rejects the possibility of the Father’s presence based on the logic associated with topological theology:⁹⁴ the Supreme God and Father of the universe cannot be confined in a place.⁹⁵ However, the Father sends the Logos in the “role of the Father and Lord of the universe” because the Son is able to be immanent in the world and present in a place.⁹⁶

Theophilus is the first Christian to use Stoic language in his description of the Word coming out of the Father.⁹⁷ Using the term *endiathetos*, Theophilus states that the Word was “always innate (ενδιάθετον) in the heart of God.”⁹⁸ This is the language pioneered by the Stoics, and Theophilus does not fail to complete the second half of the formulation with the term *prophorikos*.⁹⁹ He continues, “For before anything came into

⁹⁴ Justin’s *Dial.* 60 is the example used above.

⁹⁵ *Autol.* 2.3. See also *Autol.* 2.22 which states, “Indeed the God and Father of the universe is unconfined and is not present in a place, for *there is no place of his rest* [Isa. 66:1].”

⁹⁶ *Autol.* 2.22: “Since the Logos is God and derived his nature from God, whenever the Father of the universe wills to do so he sends him into some place where he is present and is heard and see. He is sent by God and is present in a place.”

⁹⁷ By using such language, Theophilus attempts to frame the procession of the Logos (and Sophia) out of the Father in language familiar to Autolycus, a non-Christian. See Rick Roger’s, *Theophilus of Antioch: The Life and Thought of a Second-Century Bishop* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2000), 15-29 for a discussion of the genre and content of *Autol.*

⁹⁸ *Autol.* 2.22.

⁹⁹ Grant, *Greek Apologists*, 167, follows Goodenough and investigates the similarities between Theophilus’ description of God with that presented by Philo in *De opificio mundi*. W. R. Schoedel, “Theophilus of Antioch,” 279-97, effectively countered the argument that Theophilus represents the thinking of a Jewish Christian community, which was made by Grant. See Schoedel, Curry, “The Theogony of Theophilus,” 318-26, and Kathleen E. McVey, “The Use of Stoic Cosmogony in Theophilus of Antioch’s Hexaemeron,” in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective: Studies in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich on his Sixtieth Birthday*. Edited by M.S. Burrows and P. Rorem (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991): 32-58, for a demonstration of the breadth of Theophilus’ contacts with Hellenistic Judaism as well as philosophical sources. Grant posited a much less important connection than the studies just mentioned. Pollard also wrote, “Although he makes use of Stoic terminology, Theophilus appears to be unconscious of doing so,” *Johannine Christology*, 41. Pollard’s assessment does not stand up against the studies mentioned above.

existence he had this as his Counselor, his own Mind and Intelligence. When God wished to make what he had planned to make, he generated this Logos, making him external (προφορικόν), as the firstborn of all creation.”¹⁰⁰ Theophilus accepts the Two-stage Word theory as expressed in Justin’s work and conforms it to traditional philosophic language.¹⁰¹

Theophilus also uses the image of the Logos and Sophia being brought forth out of God’s torso. He says, “Therefore God, having his own Logos innate in his own bowels, generated him together with his own Sophia, vomiting him forth before everything else.”¹⁰² There appears to be a dependence on Ps. 109:3 and 44:1-2,¹⁰³ as well as a literary connection with Hesiod.¹⁰⁴ With this quotation from 2.11 and that mentioned already from 2.22, in which the Son is stated to reside in God’s heart until he is brought forth, Theophilus draws attention to the Father as the source of the Logos (and of Sophia). *Autol.* 2.22’s identification of the Word as Councilor, Mind, and Intelligence, along with the graphic description of the Word being brought forth out of God, establishes the intimacy of nature between the Word and the Father. Theophilus does not speculate on, nor make any suggestion about, the Word’s personal distinction prior to the

¹⁰⁰ *Autol.* 2.22.

¹⁰¹ Rick Rogers makes a related point to Theophilus and philosophy. When explaining the manner by which Theophilus expresses the terms such as *logos*, *sophia*, and *pneuma*, Rogers notes, “It is important to notice that Theophilus is not writing philosophical theology per se; and therefore, he does not distinguish what appears to be two separate usages, one describing these terms as representing attributes of God and a second as divine agency,” *Theophilus of Antioch: The Life and Thought of a Second-Century Bishop* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2000), 74. I do not take Rogers to mean that Theophilus is either uninterested or unengaged with philosophy, though I am arguing that Theophilus is interacting with philosophy more than Rogers gives him credit. I am, therefore, not surprised that Rogers does not mention the background of the logos as *endiathetos* and *prophorikos* in the Stoic philosophical tradition.

¹⁰² *Autol.* 2.11.

¹⁰³ See Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch: Ad Autolyicum*, 39.

¹⁰⁴ Curry’s work demonstrates that Theophilus relied in language on Hesiod’s *Theogony*, thereby producing a work more dependent on philosophical and pagan religious sources than some scholars, such as Grant, have been willing to recognize.

generation from the Father.¹⁰⁵ Although he affirms that the Father had within Him Logos, Sophia, etc., Theophilus' theology emphasizes the transcendent Father' will to create and the subsequent generation of the Logos and Sophia.

In most cases, Theophilus refers to the Word as uniquely related to God and also as the primary instrument of creation.¹⁰⁶ In *Autol.* 2.18, Theophilus identifies the Logos and Sophia as the hands of God, responsible for creating man. Theophilus states,

For after making everything else by a word, God considered all this as incidental; he regarded the making of man as the only work worthy of his own hands. Furthermore, God is found saying 'Let us make man after the image and likeness' as if he needed assistance; but he said 'Let us make' to none other than his own Logos and his own Sophia." [*Autol.* 2.18].

God makes the world through His Logos and then mankind with the special dignity of both the Logos and Sophia. Theophilus does not seem to make a triple hypostatization of Father, Logos, and Sophia in this passage. In fact, because he refers to the Logos elsewhere as Sophia,¹⁰⁷ I think R. Rogers provides a sufficient explanation of *Autol.* 2.18. Rogers notes, "Theophilus speaks directly to the topic of God's self-sufficiency in creating with the help of now traditional tripartite language."¹⁰⁸ Theophilus'

¹⁰⁵ Numerous scholars, including Grant, argue that Theophilus' Two-stage formulation demonstrates a clear case of the Son's inferior divine nature to that of the Father. See Robert M. Grant, *Early Christian Doctrine of God* (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1966), 82-84.

¹⁰⁶ See *Autol.* 2.18.

¹⁰⁷ *Autol.* 2.22 follows 1 Cor. 1:24 in identifying the Word as the Power and Wisdom of God.

¹⁰⁸ Rick Rogers, *Theophilus of Antioch: The Life and Thought of a Second-Century Bishop* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), 77-79. See also *Autol.* 3.9, "We acknowledge a god, but only one, the Founder and Maker and Demiurge of this whole universe. We know that everything is governed by providential care, but by him alone." Robert M. Grant, "Theophilus of Antioch to Autolycus," *HTR* 40 (1947): 227-56, understands Theophilus to regard the *logos* and *sophia* as personal agents, though not the *pneuma*. Rogers disputes this saying, "I am not so sure that Theophilus considered the logos and the sophia as actual persons or hypostases, but merely tools for personifying God's work in the world, I am not as inclined to separate them from the pneuma in the bishop's underlying theological system," *Theophilus of Antioch*, 114 n.19.

anthropomorphic “hands” language, in the case of the world and man’s creation, suggests that God needs no help and is essentially speaking to Himself.¹⁰⁹

Theophilus’ “hands” language also demonstrates an important aspect of his understanding of God’s transcendence. He presents the Word as the means of demiurgic and theophanic activity. Theophilus’ Word theology sets the Father apart as transcendent while also affirming the Father’s contact with the world through His Logos (and Sophia). His “hands” language also sets the stage for Irenaeus to use and refine this theme.¹¹⁰ We will likewise see that Novatian reworks such language common to Theophilus and Irenaeus in a manner which alters the value they placed on an anthropomorphic image of God.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus describes and refutes major Gnostic groups with a strong Word Christology in *Haer.* Much of his work attacks the Valentinians who proclaimed the Logos to be both a divine individual and one of the many Aeons. Of course, Irenaeus did

¹⁰⁹ Rogers stresses two points. The first is that God is utterly removed from his creation and that He is ineffable and nearly incomprehensible (*Autol.* 1.3). The second point is that man’s creation apparently needed God’s logos hand and sophia hand, “just as without three days there would be no fourth,” *Theophilus of Antioch*, 79. Rogers concludes by saying, “Such teachings and theological rhetoric were designed to draw Autolycus away from his paganism long enough to at least consider what the bishop’s religion had to offer,” *Idem.* I find this final analysis largely unsatisfying. Theophilus is certainly engaged to some degree with philosophical concepts. This point is not in scholarly dispute. As such, the thought that Theophilus would believe Autolycus to be so quickly assuaged in his criticisms of Christianity simply by what would be perceived as simply rhetorical flourishes makes little sense. Unlike Justin, who is preoccupied most with an emphasis on the Logos and the Father, Theophilus deliberately makes room for a triadic conception of creation, at least with mankind’s creation. Though Rogers states, “Theophilus does not speak of plurality within the so-called Godhead, let alone present a primitive or alternative form of the trinity,” *Idem.*, 75. In regard to the technical terms he is using, I agree with Rogers. Yet portions of his own reading, which demonstrate the creative activity of sophia (110) as well as his argument that the steady replacement of the figure of sophia with that of pneuma probably was intentional, leads me to believe that the two points of Roger’s conclusion comes up underestimating Theophilus’ appreciation for triadic expression.

¹¹⁰ Briggmann, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 160-182.

not find the Valentinian acceptance of the Word's individuality to be problematic. Rather, he rejected the system of degrading divine emanations (the Aeons) which formed the backbone of Valentinian doctrines.¹¹¹ In response to the Valentinians, Irenaeus develops a Word Christology containing approaches to the issues of divine transcendence and immanence different from those seen in Justin and Theophilus. Although most scholars accept a clear influence from these two authors on Irenaeus,¹¹² the polemical nature of *Haer.* contributes much to his theological uniqueness.¹¹³

I will not attempt to summarize the teachings of the Gnostics, or even their accounts of the Aeons, except to mention the reason and manner by which Irenaeus rejected them. Irenaeus states,

[Gnostics] transfer the generation of the word to which men gave utterance to the eternal Word of God, assigning a beginning and course of production [to Him], even as they do to their own word. And in what respect will the Word of God—yea, rather God Himself, since He is the Word—differ from the word of men, if He follows the same order and process of generation? [*Haer.* 2.13.8]

Wolfson suggests that this passage, among others, contains the first dim articulation of a Single-stage Logos theory.¹¹⁴ This theory prioritizes the eternality of the Son or Word.

¹¹¹ See Einar Thomasen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the Valentinians*, NHS 60 (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

¹¹² See A. Briggman, "Dating Irenaeus' Acquisition," 397-402.

¹¹³ Gerard Vallée, "Irenaeus's Refutation of the Gnostics," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, vol. 1: The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries*, ed. E. P. Sanders (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980): 174-185; Richard A. Norris, "Irenaeus and Plotinus Answer the Gnostics: A Note on the Relation Between Christian Thought and Platonism", *USQR* 36:1 (Fall, 1980): 13-24; PHEME Perkins, "Irenaeus and the Gnostics. Rhetoric and Composition in *Adversus Haereses* Book One" *VC* 30 (1976): 193-200; and "Ordering the Cosmos: Irenaeus and the Gnostics," in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity*, ed. Charles W. Hendrick and Robert Hodgson, Jr. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986): 221-38.

¹¹⁴ Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 198. However, Wolfson's analysis of Irenaeus' development of this theory seems tenuous at points. He acknowledges that much of what Irenaeus does say could have been and was said by proponents of a Two-stage theory such as Justin and Theophilus. Wolfson decides that Irenaeus' overriding rejection of gnostic emanations draws out Irenaeus' emphasis on the eternal Word in a way not seen previously, 199-210. Wolfson also sees Irenaeus' acceptance of eternal generation of the Son as different from Justin and Theophilus in which the Logos came forth most specifically for creation. A. Rousseau makes a similar point in his, "La doctrine de saint Irénée sur la préexistence du Fils de Dieu dans *Dém.* 43," *Museon*, 89 (1971): 5-42.

Barnes also looks at this passage and comes to a similar conclusion. He argues that Irenaeus rejects the multiple noetic states of God inherent in the process of aeonic emissions, since multiple states would appear to challenge God's simplicity as Spirit.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Barnes also points out that Irenaeus discards the unavoidable sense of beginning and duration found within the Gnostic understanding of divine begetting.¹¹⁶ Finally, Irenaeus makes a strong case for refusing to speculate about the begetting of the Son.¹¹⁷

Irenaeus also describes the transcendence of the Word in terms similar to those which he uses with the Father. Irenaeus states,

There is therefore, as I have pointed out, one God the Father, and one Christ Jesus, who came by means of the whole dispensational arrangements [connected with Him], and gathered together all things in Himself. But in every respect, too, He is man, the formation of God; and thus He took up man into Himself, the invisible becoming visible, the incomprehensible being made comprehensible, the impassible becoming capable of suffering, and the Word being made man, thus summing up all things in Himself: so that as in super-celestial, spiritual, and invisible things, the Word of God is supreme, so also in things visible and corporeal He might possess the supremacy, and, taking to Himself the pre-eminence, as well as constituting Himself Head of the Church, He might draw all things to Himself at the proper time. [*Haer.* 3.16.6]

I wish to discuss two topics in this passage. First, Irenaeus says that the Word of God is “invisible,” “incomprehensible,” and “impassible.”¹¹⁸ Irenaeus assigns these terms to the

¹¹⁵ Barnes, “Irenaeus’s Trinitarian Theology,” 82-83

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹¹⁷ Irenaeus comments on the necessary ignorance of the process of the Son’s generation in *Haer.* 2.28.6: “If any one, therefore, says to us, ‘How then was the Son produced by the Father?’ we reply to him, that no man understands that production, or generation, or calling, or revelation, or by whatever name one may describe His generation, which is in fact altogether indescribable. Neither Valentinus, nor Marcion, nor Satrninus, nor Basilides, nor angels, nor archangels, nor principalities, nor powers [possess this knowledge], but the Father only who begat, and the Son who was begotten.”

¹¹⁸ In the Latin we have of *Haer.*, the terms *inuisibilis*, *incomprehensibilis*, and *impassibilis* are used.

Father as well.¹¹⁹ Daniélou concludes from Irenaeus' remarks that, "what is involved, therefore, is not a difference of nature between the Son and the Father, but the reflection in their activity in the world of their inter-relation with the Trinity, by which the Son is the manifestation of the Father."¹²⁰ Secondly, the above passage demonstrates Irenaeus' commitment to describing the same person as Word, Jesus, Christ, and Son, in many other passages.¹²¹ Grillmeier cites the above quotation and mentions that Irenaeus also repeatedly uses "a quote which will occur some seven times even in the Chalcedonian Definition, 'Christ, one and the same.'"¹²² As seen above, Justin similarly makes the names interchangeable. The single subjectivity of the Word, who is Christ, remained a focal point in the Word Christology tradition against a variety of theological opponents.

The preceding paragraphs bring to light two important aspects of Irenaeus' Word Christology which, when combined, set him apart from the work of Justin and Theophilus. First, Irenaeus describes the Word as eternal and distinct from the Father whereas Justin and Theophilus attribute a causal rationality for the hypostatization of the Word.¹²³ This is the difference between a Single-stage Logos theology (Irenaeus) and a Two-stage theory (Justin and Theophilus). We only get the impression with Justin and Theophilus that the Word becomes a distinct figure in conjunction with the creation of

¹¹⁹ Juan Ochagavía, *Visibile Patris Filius: A Study of Irenaeus' Teaching on Revelation and Tradition* (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1964), 22, identifies eleven terms Irenaeus uses to describe God's transcendence. They include: *immensurabilis, incapabilis, incomprehensibilis, indeterminabilis, inerarrabilis, inexcogitabilis, investigabilis, invisibilis, non transibilis, ingenuus, ignotus*. I take *impassibilis* to be a synonym for *non transibilis*.

¹²⁰ Daniélou, *Gospel Message*, 359.

¹²¹ Barnes, "A Night at the OPERA: That the Father is Seen in the Son," Paper presented at NAPS 2008 conference, notes that Irenaeus' theological interest lies fundamentally in the exploration of the term "Word" rather than "Son," though Irenaeus uses Son often throughout his writings. The emphasis on Word does not call into question the fact that Son, Word, Jesus, and Christ, designate the same individual.

¹²² Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 102.

¹²³ Pollard concludes, "In opposition to the emanationism of the Gnostics, which implies the posteriority of the Logos to God, Irenaeus repeatedly insists on the eternity of the Son with the Father," *Johannine Christology*, 46-7. As evidence, he notes *Haer.* 2.25.3; 2.30.9; 3.18.1; 4.6.2; 4.14.1; 4.20.7; *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 30.

the world. Second, after Irenaeus suggests the eternal distinction of the Word from the Father, he goes on to attribute characteristics of divinity to the Word not seen previously in Justin or Theophilus.¹²⁴ R. A. Norris offers a typical evaluation of Irenaeus' work, "He tries to make of the Logos not a buffer between the ingenerate God and the generate world, but the presence within the world of the Godhead itself."¹²⁵ Irenaeus maintains the Father's divine transcendence while designating the Word's divinity through the same transcendent terms and categories noted above. Although Justin and Theophilus use ideas which demonstrate that the Word shares in the divine nature, Irenaeus is the first of these authors to argue from an equality of attributes.

Norris' evaluation shows that Irenaeus in no way abandons the element of divine immanence. The major difference can be described as Irenaeus' attempt to either limit or eliminate the subordination of the Son's nature in relation to the Father's.¹²⁶ Justin, by contrast, developed a Word Christology with hints of the essential/natural subordination of the Son to the Father.

¹²⁴ Although Justin pressed the point that the Word was the instrument of God's creation, he ridiculed those who did not know the difference between the Father who is invisible from the Son who does appear. The difference between Justin and Irenaeus on this point appears to be Irenaeus' belief that the Word's full divinity must be maintained before addressing the Incarnation. This allows him to counter any suggestion of subordination of nature between Father and Word. Justin's writings do not demonstrate such clarity on this issue. Theophilus, especially in *Autol.* 1.3, does not clearly teach the same kind of distinction or hypostatization which Irenaeus sets out.

¹²⁵ Norris, *God and World*, 88. Norris criticizes Irenaeus' consistency by saying, "The result of this attempt is, of course, a certain incoherence in his own position. His two ways of talking do not fit together very well; and the problem of how, or in what sense, the Logos was 'generate' could not, as the future was to show, be evaded," *Ibid.*, 88-89. Cf. the work of Barnes who picks up Lebreton's term, "reciprocal immanence," to refer to Irenaeus' teaching that the Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son. See *Haer.* 3.11.5-6 and 3.6.2 for examples of this and also Barnes' exegesis of these passages, "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 79-81. Barnes concludes that Irenaeus' theology does account for the Son's simultaneous immanence with the Father and the world. Unlike Norris, Barnes believes that Irenaeus is not intellectually inconsistent in framing the Son's interaction with the world in contrast to the immanence within the Father.

¹²⁶ Stead, for example, allows the possibility that Irenaeus attempted to suggest the coequality of the Son and Spirit with the Father, in *Philosophy*, 157.

When Irenaeus follows his predecessors in seeing the Word as the subject of the theophanies,¹²⁷ he does not use the topic to contrast the attributes of the Father with the Son, but rather to simply affirm the Father's transcendence. One topic on which Irenaeus follows Justin is the mention of activities related to creation and redemption as divine activities. According to Irenaeus, God created with His two hands.¹²⁸ The parallel with Theophilus' hands language is striking, but Irenaeus moves beyond Theophilus' point to speak also of God's constant contact, which in turn relates to the subject of redemption. Irenaeus develops the teaching regarding God's purposeful interaction with mankind beyond theophanies. He writes,

At the beginning of our formation in Adam, that breath of life which proceeded from God, having been united to what had been fashioned, animated the man, and manifested him as a being endowed with reason; so also, in [the times of] the end, the Word of the Father and the Spirit of God, having become united with the ancient substance of Adam's formation, rendered man living and perfect, receptive of the perfect Father, in order that as in the natural [Adam] we all were dead, so in the spiritual we may all be made alive. For never at any time did Adam escape the hands of God, to whom the Father speaking, said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. [*Haer.* 5.1.3]

The Father has always kept His hands upon mankind in a way which continues mankind's growth. God forms and shapes mankind until it receives a new and permanent spiritual life. Some scholars have described these concepts as the foundation of Irenaeus' anthropology.¹²⁹ Man is formed and always reformed in order to be brought, through the hands of God, to a final presence with the Father.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ See, for example, *Haer.* 4.10.1 in which it is the Son who speaks with Abraham at his tent as well as the Son who speaks to Moses from the burning bush.

¹²⁸ *Haer.* 4.20.1. This passage relates most specifically to the act of creation.

¹²⁹ For a judgment to this effect, see John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹³⁰ *Haer.* 4.38.3-4.

Irenaeus' description of God's transcendence distinguishes his thinking from that of both Justin and Theophilus on three important counts. First, Irenaeus relies upon terminology associated with the Word's shared nature with the Father in ways unexpressed in either Justin or Theophilus. Second, Irenaeus' writings contain strong indications that he taught a doctrine of eternal generation. Third, Irenaeus' emphasis on hands language suggests an avenue for the Father's immanence not found in either Justin or Theophilus. With the preceding theological points in mind regarding the Logos, Irenaeus turns towards the Incarnation as the pinnacle of revelation. He names the vision of God as the center of humanity's growth. This vision begins and develops only through the vision of God the Son here on earth. Barnes, R. Tremblay, and D. E. Lanné each discuss this point and demonstrate Irenaeus' uniqueness in this regard.¹³¹ Irenaeus' approach to God's immanence is distinct from that of his predecessors.

Hippolytus

The *Refutation of All Heresies* (*Ref.*) and the *Contra Noetum* (*Noet.*) contain the most developed Word Christologies within the Hippolytean corpus.¹³² As noted in the Introduction, I accept the judgment that a single author probably did not produce these works. In addition, scholars remain divided on the whether these works, at least *Noet.*, influenced Tertullian or the reverse.¹³³ I will present the Word Christology first of the *Ref.* and then of *Noet.* Both of these works rely on the traditions seen thus far in Justin,

¹³¹ Barnes, "A Night at the OPERA"; Réal Tremblay, *La manifestation et la vision de Dieu selon saint Irénée de Lyon* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978); D. E. Lanné, "La vision de Dieu dans l'œuvre de S. Irénée," *Irenikon* 33 (1960), 311-320.

¹³² I refer to the author of the *Ref.* as "Hippolytus" following traditional attribution and for convenience sake. I refer to the author of *Noet.* simply as that, which is clumsy, but avoids the confusion of attributing *Ref.* and *Noet.* to the same person.

¹³³ I have not come to a final judgment on this matter. In regard to Novatian, the question does not matter all that much since it seems that Novatian knew both works.

Theophilus, and Irenaeus. Furthermore, the theological challenge of defending the aforementioned Word Christology tradition against the Logos theology of Modalists/Sabellians certainly helped to shape the Hippolytean works. The *Ref.* and *Noet.* present a Word Christology in light of this theological fight.

Hippolytus bases his theology in the *Ref.* on the teaching that the Father existed alone in eternity:¹³⁴

The first and only (one God), both Creator and Lord of all, had nothing coeval with Himself, not infinite chaos, nor measureless water, nor solid earth, nor dense air, not warm fire, nor refined spirit, nor the azure canopy of the stupendous firmament. But He was One, alone in Himself. [*Ref.* 10.28]

Hippolytus affirms that God's transcendence can be found in His unique, eternal being.¹³⁵

In addition, the inherent acceptance of *creatio ex nihilo* in the above passage shows that

Hippolytus accepted Theophilus and Irenaeus' insistence on this doctrine.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Hippolytus' *Ref.* attacks philosophers, Jewish sects, Gnostic groups, and also the monarchian Christian groups which have, according to the author, fallen away from the truth. I will only emphasize Hippolytus' specific arguments against the last group. Hippolytus accepts that monarchian theologies found in Rome and supported by some in the Church hierarchy may have become dominant among the majority of believers; *Ref.* 9.2 suggests that the teachings of Zephyrinus and Callistus were the prevalent form of theology. Hippolytus makes it a point to state that he and his group never "colluded" with them. Of Callistus' theology Simonetti writes, "[T]he formula put forward by Callistus took into account the Monarchian sympathies of this majority [towards Sabellianism] and was thus thrown somewhat out of balance by its leaning in that direction. The concept—a new one in the controversy—on which the formula was based was that of spirit (*pneuma*): a spirit which, in the Soic manner, is entirely one with the Logos, pervades the universe, and is identical with God in all God's manifestations, whether as Father or as Son. This Spirit descended and was incarnated in the Virgin," "Beginnings of Theological Reflections," in *The Cambridge History of Early Christianity*, Eds. Young, Francis, Lewis Ayres, Andrew Louth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 215.

¹³⁵ Hippolytus may of course also be addressing his theological opponents, led by Callistus, who called him a "ditheist." See *Ref.* 9.6 and 9.7.

¹³⁶ Torchia details the shift in teaching on the topic of *creatio ex nihilo* from Justin and Athenagoras, to Tatian and Theophilus. His conclusion is that Christians originally worked within a Hellenistic philosophical framework which may have accepted eternal matter. Tatian and Theophilus, however, base their cosmologies on the Christian teaching of *creatio ex nihilo*. See his, "Theories of Creation," 192-99. Tertullian's attack on Hermogenes demonstrates the fact that, by the beginning of the 3rd century A.D., *creatio ex nihilo* was viewed by many as a requirement of Christian belief. See also Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of 'Creation out of Nothing' in Early Christian Thought*. Trans. by A. S. Worrall (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), especially 156-178 for a treatment of Theophilus and Irenaeus.

Through his treatment of the Son's generation, Hippolytus draws out the uniqueness and transcendence of the Father. He returns to the Two-stage Logos theology held by Justin and Theophilus, as opposed to following Irenaeus' indication of the eternal distinction of the Son. Hippolytus writes, "Therefore this solitary and supreme Deity, by an exercise of reflection, brought forth the Logos first; not the word in the sense of being articulated by voice, but as a ratiocination of the universe, conceived and residing in the divine mind."¹³⁷ The Logos was in the Father, but then the Father brought him forth in order to create according to the Father's will.¹³⁸ Hippolytus rejects the tradition based on the Stoic emphasis of the Word as a voice or sound. This inclusion is a necessity in light of Hippolytus' polemics against the monarchians.¹³⁹ The monarchians appear to have accepted the Stoic understanding of Logos as voice and in turn used this classification to reject the belief in a divine Logos figure distinguishable from the Father.¹⁴⁰

Hippolytus calls the Word "God" based upon two factors. First, the Word arises not out of a combination of created elements but out of the substance of the Father. Hippolytus states, "The Logos alone of this *God* is from *God* himself; wherefore also *the Logos* is God, being *the* substance of God."¹⁴¹ Shared substance language grounds Hippolytus' association of the Son being God like the Father.¹⁴² Second, Hippolytus

¹³⁷ *Ref.* 10.29.

¹³⁸ *Idem.*

¹³⁹ These topics revolve around ideas about transcendence and immanence. The monarchians claim that the Father became incarnate. Since the Logos is not a distinct divine personality, the monarchians reject the tradition seen in Justin, Theophilus, and Irenaeus which speaks of divine immanence through the presence of the Logos and/or the Spirit. I am unaware of the need of either Justin or Theophilus to specifically counter theological opponents arguing for a similarity between human speech and the begetting of the Word.

¹⁴⁰ Heine has persuasively argued this point in his "Christology of Callistus," 61.

¹⁴¹ *Ref.* 10.29.

¹⁴² Irenaeus' contribution to this topic is based on the connection he makes between the Son's divinity and the Son's nature as Spirit. Barnes develops this aspect of Irenaeus' theology by joining the idea of the divinity of the Word/Son to the fact that the Father is Word and Spirit, since Irenaeus at times uses these terms to designate the divine nature. The fact that the Son is Spirit from the Father, who is also

associates the divinity of the Word with the Father's will, which was a connection made by Justin. The Word shares the Father's will and enacts the "ideas conceived in the Father."¹⁴³

Hippolytus treats the distinction of the Word from the Father as dependent on creation and identifies the Word as the center of revelation. He uses the Word to depict divine creative activity, immanence, guidance, and redemption for the world. Since mankind possesses free will, the activity of the Word offers the opportunity to seek after God. First, the Word brings the divine commands through the prophets: "But the Word, by declaring them, promulgated the divine commandments, thereby turning man from disobedience."¹⁴⁴ Though Justin at times attributes the role of prophetic utterance to the Word, he like Irenaeus, mentions this activity as primarily the Spirit's work. Hippolytus forgoes language about the Spirit for a variety of possible reasons.¹⁴⁵

Next, Hippolytus identifies the Incarnation as the pinnacle of divine-human contact, as had Justin and Irenaeus. According to Hippolytus, man is offered the chance to freely follow God when the Word Himself offers guidance in the flesh:

This Logos the Father in the latter *days* sent forth, no longer to speak by a prophet, and not wishing that *the Word*, being obscurely proclaimed, should be made the subject of mere conjecture, but that He should be manifested, so that we could see Him with our own eyes. This *Logos*, I say, the Father sent forth, in order that *the* world, on beholding Him, might reverence Him who was delivering precepts not by *the* person of prophets, nor terrifying the soul by an angel, but who was Himself—He that had spoken—*corporally* present *amongst us*. This

Spirit, necessarily includes the notion that the Son is God. Barnes writes, "It is not because the Second Person is "God's Word [Logos]" that He is God, but because He is Word He is God, for only God is Word," "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 75.

¹⁴³ *Ref.* 10.29

¹⁴⁴ *Idem.*

¹⁴⁵ The fact that he was called a "ditheist" by Callistus may indicate that Hippolytus' theology made no mention of a distinctive or hypostatic Spirit. Another possible interpretation of Hippolytus' silence on the Holy Spirit in the *Ref.* may be the refusal to give any space to the modalist emphasis on the Spirit as the ultimate description of divinity. See Heine, "Christology of Callistus," 64.

Logos we know to have received a body from a virgin, *and* to have remodeled the old man by a new creation. [*Ref.* 10.29]

The Father, who brought forth the *Logos* as the agent of creation, also offers man redemption through the *Logos*. Man's free will to see and follow the Incarnate *Logos* becomes for Hippolytus the avenue by which man gains divinization: "Whatever it is consistent with God *to impart*, these God has promised to bestow upon thee, because thou hast been deified, and begotten unto immortality."¹⁴⁶ By "consistent," Hippolytus seems to suggest the granting of immortality to divinized man in conjunction with the immortality already granted to man's soul.¹⁴⁷

In *Ref.*, Hippolytus draws together the topics of immanence and transcendence in a unique way. Although he portrays divinization through the gift of immortality, a certain ambivalence remains about Hippolytus' understanding of the sharing of the divine substance itself. In passing, Hippolytus mentions the possibility of the Father begetting other divinities. He writes, "For if He had willed to make thee a god, He could have done so. Thou hast the example of the *Logos*."¹⁴⁸ This passage implies that God can bring or choose not to bring an undefined amount of divine beings out of His substance. Because *Ref.* identifies the *Logos* exclusively as God and as sharing the divine substance, it is difficult to ascertain all of his underlying thoughts on the matter. Beyond the theological possibilities implied by *Ref.* 10.29, Hippolytus certainly recognizes the Word as uniquely sharing the Father's divinity and substance.

Although I will point to several discrepancies between the *Noet.* and *Ref.* in the following portion of this section, it is important to point out that both contain numerous

¹⁴⁶ *Ref.* 10.30.

¹⁴⁷ *Idem.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ref.* 10.29. Cf. Justin *Dial.* 127: "...but [they saw] Him who, according to God's will, is God the Son, and His Angel because He served the Father's will."

similarities in their respective Word Christologies. When describing the creation of the world, *Noet.* begins with the following statement concerning God's singularity: "While God was existing alone, and had nothing contemporaneous with himself, he resolved to create the world."¹⁴⁹ The parallel with *Ref.* 10.28, cited above, is obvious. *Noet.* immediately clarifies the singularity of the Father with the following, "But alone though he was, he was manifold (πολὺς). For he was not Word-less nor Wisdom-less nor Power-less nor Mind-less. But everything was in him, and he was himself the All."¹⁵⁰ Both *Ref.* and *Noet.* speak of Word, Wisdom, Power, and Mind as attributes of the one God. Both also treat the singularity of the Father as central to their theological starting point.¹⁵¹

After identifying the singularity of the Father, *Noet.* points to the Word as the instrument of creation. The author also incorporates Wisdom's role in the arrangement of the things made by the Word into his creation narrative. *Noet.* 10.3 states, "For everything that has come into being he contrives through Word and Wisdom—creating by Word and setting in due order by Wisdom." *Noet.* perhaps draws on Irenaeus, who spoke of the Word as the instrument of creation and the Spirit as responsible for arranging the newly made works.¹⁵² Also, like Irenaeus' *Haer.*, *Noet.* links Wisdom with the Holy Spirit.¹⁵³

Noet. 10.4 elaborates on God's manifold attributes. It states,

This word which he has in himself and is invisible to the world that is being created, he makes visible. In uttering what was formerly a sound (φωνήν), and in bringing forth light out of light, he sent forth in the creation, as its Lord, his own Mind, which previously was visible to himself alone. And him who was invisible

¹⁴⁹ *Noet.* 10.1.

¹⁵⁰ *Noet.* 10.2.

¹⁵¹ As mentioned above, *Ref.* 10.29 suggests that other individuals (humans in this case) may have been put forth as gods, like the Logos. The possibility that the author of *Noet.* might share the same theological ambivalence to the possibility of a greater array of divinities remains open.

¹⁵² *Haer.* 2.30.9; *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 5.

¹⁵³ In *Noet.* 14.5-6, the author is referring to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as God.

to the world that is coming into being, he makes visible, so that through his appearance the world might be able to see and be saved.

By calling the Logos a sound (*phone*), *Noet.* does two things. First, *Noet.* appears to amplify Justin and Theophilus' Two-stage Logos theories. Where they wrote with ambivalence about the distinction of the Logos while still in the Father (as opposed to Irenaeus' inclination towards eternal distinction and the explicit repudiation of comparing a man's begetting of a word to the divine begetting), the author of *Noet.* states that the Logos was only first a "sound." Second, the multiplicity (*polus*) of 10.2 appears to describe divine attributes only. *Noet.* therefore most likely teaches that the Logos was not a distinct figure (even within God) prior to being sent forth.¹⁵⁴

There is no doubt, however, that *Noet.* treats the Word as sent forth by the Father for creation and redemption.¹⁵⁵ In fact, the author emphasizes this point by identifying the Word as the Son only at the Incarnation.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, in *Noet.* we see a progressive development of the distinction and subjectivity of the Word. First it is regarded as the mind of the Father. Next, the Word is sent out of the Father as the distinct agent of creation. Finally, the Word takes on the flesh of humanity and properly becomes the Son.

¹⁵⁴ This statement relies in part on the arguments of A. Brent's, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church*. He concludes that *Noet.* represents a depersonalization of both the Logos and the Spirit. Brent believes Hippolytus authored the *Noet.* as an attempt at theological rapprochement with the community of Callistus. Brent states, "The author of *Noet.* 10,4 is to the contrary quite prepared to acknowledge the relationship between the pre-incarnate [Logos] and the Father as an uttered voice..., inseparable in such a form from himself. We see here that the [Logos] is far more an instrument of the Father's will than separate in his own right," *Hippolytus and the Roman Church*, 210. Cf. Butterworth's comments in *Hippolytus of Rome: Contra Noetum*, especially 98-99. Butterworth concludes nearly the opposite of Brent.

¹⁵⁵ *Noet.* makes this point in a later section by connecting the voice of God to subjectivity and visibility and hence distinction: "Now, only God's Word is visible—that of man is audible," *Noet.* 13.1.

¹⁵⁶ *Noet.* 15.7 states, "For the Word was not a perfect Son when he was fleshless and on his own, although because he was Word, he was perfect Only-begotten. Nor could the flesh exist on its own apart from the Word, because it has its subsistence in the Word. So in this way a single perfect Son of God was made manifest."

In this progression, *Noet.* insists on the divinity of the Logos, thereby identifying the divine immanence in the world through his Word Christology.

Noet. offers a variation on the explanation of divine unity between the Father and the Word from that seen in Hippolytus' *Ref.* or in Justin's works. Where these authors spoke of shared substance, *Noet.* attributes unity most explicitly to the idea of a shared power. The accusation of ditheism by the monarchians, however, seems to have led *Noet.*'s author to include in his arguments familiar metaphors (or variations of them) related to sameness of nature:

Now when I say 'other', I am not saying there are two gods. But it is like light out of light, or like water out of a spring, or like a sunbeam out of the sun. For there is a single Power (δύναμις) that comes out of the All. But the All is the Father, and the Power (δύναμις) that comes out of him is the Word." [*Noet.* 11.1]

The metaphors suggest a shared substance between Father and Logos, yet *Noet.* explains the connection through the idea of a singularity of power. This passage recalls the use Justin made of power in *Dial.* 127, cited above. There Justin also employs the category of divine power to speak about God's immanence in the world;¹⁵⁷ however, Justin did not press the connection between Logos and Power as directly as the author of *Noet.*¹⁵⁸

Noet. joins the foregoing description of shared power to language about the *oikonomia*.¹⁵⁹ In *Noet.* 14.3, the author denies the existence of two gods but embraces the idea that the Logos is a second person (*prosopon*). This section states, "While I will not say that there are two gods—but rather one—I will say there are two persons; and that a

¹⁵⁷ Recall that Ps.-Aristotle's *Mund.* also presents divine immanence through the concept of power.

¹⁵⁸ See *Noet.* 16.1.

¹⁵⁹ In his description of Tertullian's understanding of the *oikonomia*, Daniélou agrees with Moingt's assessment of the widespread use of the term: "[Moingt] points out that the word οἰκονομία, which, it has often been observed, expresses the underlying inner organization of the substance of God, always has the same meaning in Tertullian's writings as it had in those of Irenaeus before him and was to retain in later times, namely the unfolding of the divine plan of salvation," *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 365.

third economy is the grace of the Holy Spirit.” The author then begins to treat the Word and Holy Spirit as distinct subjects who act in accord with the Father’s will: “The Father gives orders, the Word performs the work... This is because there is one God. For the one who commands is the Father, the one who obeys is the Son, and the one who promotes mutual understanding is the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶⁰ A. B. McGowan concludes, “For Hippolytus, the ‘economy’ is a matter of divine interaction with the world, as in the more enduring and better-known use of the term by Irenaeus.”¹⁶¹ *Noet.*’s Trinitarian focus, as in the passage above, may have been influenced by Irenaeus’ Trinitarian theology, which identified the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as sharing divine activities.¹⁶²

Along with the description of the Logos obeying the command of the Father and the Son being visible (in contrast to the Father),¹⁶³ *Noet.* concludes by suggesting an interplay of transcendence and immanence language. Alluding to Eph. 4:6, *Noet.* states, “He who is Father is over all things, and the Son is through all things, and the Holy Spirit is in all things. We can get no idea of the one God other than by really believing in Father and Son and Holy Spirit.”¹⁶⁴ This passage suggests the common demarcation of divine transcendence and immanence. The Father is transcendent (“above”) and the Son and Spirit are immanent (“through” and “in,” respectively). *Noet.*, however, clouds this clear demarcation with the pronouncement that knowledge of the one God equates to

¹⁶⁰ *Noet.* 14.4-5. Cf. Brent who argues that *Noet.* presents the Spirit throughout as an instrument.

¹⁶¹ Andrew B. McGowan, “God in Early Latin Theology: Tertullian and the Trinity,” in *God in Early Christian Thought*, Ed. Andrew B. McGowan, Brian E. Daley S.J. and Timothy J. Gaden (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 69. Pollard emphasizes a slightly different understanding of the economic Trinitarianism in *Noet.* by pointed out that “Hippolytus appears... to be reluctant to call the second Person of the trinity ‘Son’ before the incarnation, so that frequently he seems to suggest that the Word became Son at the incarnation. Thus he forshadowes the economic trinitarianism of Marcellus of Ancyra,” *Johannine Christology*, 56. *Noet.* reflects a similar identification of the Word becoming Son which can be found in Tertullian. On this point, see the section on Tertullian below.

¹⁶² See Briggman, *Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 276-307.

¹⁶³ Grillmeier suggests that *Noet.* lays a great stress on the Incarnation in order to demonstrate the Son’s visibility compared with the Father’s invisibility, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 114.

¹⁶⁴ *Noet.* 14:5-6.

belief in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This passage makes the categories of transcendence and immanence relative to the fundamental oneness of God. The one God includes the transcendent Father and the immanent Son and Spirit.

Noet. formulates the transcendence and immanence of God based on the concept of the *oikonomia*. The distinct roles of the Father, Son, and Spirit mark the boundary of belief in opposition to the doctrines of the modalists. *Noet.* states, “But let us keep our eyes on the subject in hand: that it really was the Father’s own Power, brethren,—which is the Word—that came down from heaven, and not the Father in person.”¹⁶⁵ The distinction of the Word from the Father equates to the difference between the transcendent and singular Father, who remains apart from creation, and the immanent presence and power of God, which is sent forth by becoming the visible Word and eventually the perfect Son.¹⁶⁶ Even so, *Noet.*’s identification of the one God as Father, Son, and Spirit, offers a Trinitarian approach to thinking about the one God which I will show Novatian rejects.

Tertullian

Tertullian contributed numerous technical Latin terms into the Word Christology tradition. He is credited with influencing all subsequent theology written in Latin in the Western Church.¹⁶⁷ Apart from the novelty he brought into the Western tradition, he also

¹⁶⁵ *Noet.* 16.1.

¹⁶⁶ I agree with Brent and others who argue for the presence both of subordinationism in *Noet.* as well as the probability that the author would not or did not side with Irenaeus’ acceptance of the eternal distinction between the Word and the Father.

¹⁶⁷ For a discussion of some of the contributions of Tertullian’s terminology, see Mohrmann, “Les origines de la latinité chrétienne,” 67-106, 163-83. Grillmeier notes, “In the opinion of many writers, the older Western christology finds its consummation in Tertullian, particularly in the formulation of his christology,” *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 117. He also adds that Hilary, in his *Commentary on Matthew* 5.1, suggested Tertullian’s influence was not very great, but concludes, “Certainly much of his

continued and developed many of the theological traditions which he inherited from Justin and Irenaeus.¹⁶⁸ Additionally, important parallels with the language and thought of *Noet.* stand out in Tertullian's work.¹⁶⁹ Taking into account his reliance on several theological traditions, Tertullian adds new dimensions to language concerning divine transcendence and immanence. Tertullian, unlike *Noet.*, bases divine unity on the shared substance of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, rather than the *Noet.*'s emphasis on power.¹⁷⁰ Tertullian couples this position with arguments affirming the necessity of the Son's (and Spirit's) immanence, rather than the Father's.

Tertullian wrote *Prax.* perhaps in 213,¹⁷¹ and the Word Christology presented within it represents his theologically mature work.¹⁷² Therefore, I use *Prax.* as the basis for presenting Tertullian's Word Christology.¹⁷³ By doing so, I will also better be able to point out in which ways Novatian departs from Tertullian's later, Christological thinking.

[Tertullian's] influence remained alive, even if his name is often passed over in silence," Ibid., 118. Again, my project does not judge Novatian's theology based on his appropriation of Tertullian's terminology.

¹⁶⁸ Although both of these authors lived in the West, they exhibited aspects of the Eastern theology of their geographic origins; Justin was a Samaritan while Irenaeus was from Antioch.

¹⁶⁹ McGowan, "God in Early Latin Theology," 68-99, believes Tertullian used *Noet.*, relying, in part, on Manlio Simonetti's, "Due note su Ippolito," *Ricerche su Ippolito* (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 13; Rome: Institutum Patristicum "Augustinianum," 1977): 126-36. Cf. Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church*, 529-535, who believes *Noet.* depends on Tertullian.

¹⁷⁰ Pollard, *Johannine Christology*, 58.

¹⁷¹ Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 41. See also W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 345; Edgar G. Foster, *Angelomorphic Christology and the Exegesis of Psalm 8:5 in Tertullian's Adversus Praxeum* (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 2005), v.

¹⁷² McGowan explores the development of Tertullian's Trinitarian thought in light of *Herm.* and *Prax.* in "God in Early Latin Theology." He writes, "The change between *Against Hermogenes* to *Against Praxeas* is significant. Where previously Tertullian regarded the divine economy as effected fully only in the actual course of salvation history, now he expounds inner-trinitarian relations as pre-historic. There was when the threeness of God was not, although this was before all things," Ibid. 68.

¹⁷³ I am arguing that Novatian did not see Tertullian's work in this light. Although Novatian clearly understood the applicability of *Prax.* to the theological controversies of his own time (especially in light of Tertullian's anti-Sabellian arguments), we are not required to believe that Novatian read Tertullian's works as if they possessed greater or better doctrinal formulations the later they were written. Much of my analysis of Novatian's work looks to *Herm.* as a source for his theological ideas. By presenting Tertullian's Word Christology here, I will better be able to point out in what ways the theology of the Father from *Herm.* (which so greatly influenced Novatian) trumps any Christological or Trinitarian sense of importance regarding the theological development of what were later understood as orthodox positions in *Prax.*

Tertullian begins by affirming the oneness of God. He writes, “For before all things God was alone (*solus*), himself his own world and location and everything—alone (*solus*) however because there was nothing external beside him.”¹⁷⁴ Tertullian’s statement uses the same kind of language found in *Ref.* 10.28 and *Noet.* 10.1, to describe God’s singleness.

Like *Ref.* and *Noet.*, Tertullian’s affirmation of God’s singleness counters both Sabellian theology as well as the Sabellian¹⁷⁵ claims that he proposed more than one God.¹⁷⁶ Tertullian then turns to God’s interior life to also insist on some form of multiplicity. He continues, “Yet not even then was he alone (*solus*): for he had with him that Reason (*ratio*) which he had in himself—his own, of course. For God is rational, and reason is primarily in him, and thus from him are all things: and that Reason is his consciousness (*sensus*).”¹⁷⁷ Tertullian joins Hippolytus and the author of *Noet.* in emphasizing the noetic foundation of divine life. *Prax.*, for example, shares with *Ref.* the idea that the basis for speaking about the bringing forth of the Word concerns the ratiocination of God. Like *Noet.*, Tertullian identifies God as manifold with his Word, Wisdom, Power, and Mind.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ *Prax.* 5.

¹⁷⁵ Of course, Tertullian identifies this theology with Praxeus.

¹⁷⁶ As noted, Hippolytus and the author of *Noet* contended with the accusation of being called ditheists in *Ref.* 9.7 in *Noet.* 11.1. Tertullian acknowledges a similar charge, saying in *Prax.* 3, “And so <people> put it about that by us two or even three <gods> are preached, while they, they claim, are worshippers of one God.”

¹⁷⁷ *Prax.* 5.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church*, 209, who argues that *Ref.* proposes a distinction between the mind (*nous*) of God and the Logos whereas *Noet.* equates them. This, for Brent, means that *Noet.*’s theology depends upon the depersonalization of the Word in order to make peace with the monarchians. I disagree with Brent’s understanding of *Noet.*’s Word Christology.

Tertullian also connects the term *sermo*, his equivalent of the Greek *logos*, with *ratio*. Tertullian writes:¹⁷⁹

For God is rational (*rationalis*), and reason is primarily in him, and thus from him are all things: and that Reason (*ratio*) is his consciousness (*sensus*). This the Greeks call Logos, by which expression we also designate discourse (*sermonem*): and consequently our people are already wont, through the artlessness of the translation, to say that Discourse (*sermonem*)¹⁸⁰ was in the beginning with God, though it would be more appropriate to consider Reason (*rationem*) of older standing, seeing that God is [not] discursive (*sermonalis*) from the beginning but is rational (*rationalis*) even before the beginning, and because discourse (*sermo*) itself, having its ground in reason (*ratione*), shows reason to be prior as being its substance (*substantium*). [*Prax.* 5]

Tertullian formulates an approach to God's nature as noetic in light of his own development of Word Christology.¹⁸¹ He begins by affirming divine rationality (*ratio*) as the basis of speaking about divine attributes. Tertullian emphasizes the noetic nature of the terms associated with Word Christology (*sermo*, *verbum*, or *logos*) in his presentation of God's nature as rational.

By making *ratio* the basis of characterizing God's nature, Tertullian claims that *sermo* also always exists in God as a faculty of *ratio*. He writes, "For although God had not yet uttered his Discourse, he always had it within himself along with and in his

¹⁷⁹ Evans points out that Tertullian mentions the connection between the philosophical precedents and the traditional Christian use of *sermo* for Word in North Africa (see *Prax.* 5), *Tertullian's Treatise*, 37. This point is significant because *verbum* is the term used in John's Gospel in some of the Latin translations. Tertullian's use of *sermo* probably reflects a local or regional use which he must cater to, perhaps because it may have been a part of some of the most ancient Latin biblical translations.

¹⁸⁰ Evans translates *sermo* as "Discourse" rather than "Word" until the middle of *Prax.* 7. He believes that Tertullian's goal in these chapters strictly concerns the affirmation of the divine rational nature. Evans suggests that these preliminary remarks by Tertullian allow him to discuss the relationship between the Father and His Word based upon a shared nature. While I accept the underlying thematic and linguistic understanding which Evans attempts to get across through his translation, I do not think his understanding of Tertullian's content necessarily holds out until chapter 7. See, for example, *Prax.* 6 in which Tertullian writes, "For when first God's will was to produce in their own substances and species those things which in company of Wisdom and Reason and Discourse he had ordained within himself, he first brought forth Discourse, which had within it its own inseparable Reason and Wisdom, so that the universe of things might come into existence by the agency of none other than him by whose agency they had been thought out and ordained, yea even already made as far as concerns the consciousness of God." I believe that Tertullian is already building upon the idea of a personal Word in this passage.

¹⁸¹ "To say that Discourse was in the beginning with God," clearly refers to John 1.1.

Reason, while he silently thought out and ordained with himself the things which he was shortly to say by the agency of Discourse.”¹⁸² Tertullian’s thinking is bound to the idea that a second divine figure must not infringe on the singleness of the one God. By claiming that God’s *sermo* is directly connected to His *ratio*,¹⁸³ Tertullian offers his Word Christology as a bridge between divine multiplicity and the idea of the divine rational nature. This recalls *Noet.* 10.2’s equating of the Word with the mind of God, noted above.

In his description of the sending forth of the *sermo* by God, Tertullian’s statements contain clear affinities with the traditions about the stages of the Word’s begetting. Tertullian writes,

At that point therefore Discourse also itself receives its manifestation and equipment, namely sound and voice, when God says, *Let there be light*. This is the complete nativity (*nativitas perfecta*) of Discourse, when it comes forth from God: <it was> first established by him for thought under the name of Wisdom—*The Lord established me as a beginning of his ways*: then begotten for activity—*When he prepared the heaven I was present with him*: thereafter causing him to be his Father by proceeding from whom he became Son, the first-begotten before all things, the only-begotten as alone begotten out of God in a true sense from the womb of his heart. [*Prax.* 7]¹⁸⁴

We already saw that *Autol.* and *Ref.* implied that the Logos lacked distinction while in the Father, apparently presupposing some of the Stoic understanding of Logos as sound. *Noet.* took this a step further and spoke of the Logos being originally a sound. In contrast, it seems that Tertullian reproduces this language in order to co-opt it as descriptive of one of the Word’s stages. This passage therefore describes the internal

¹⁸² *Prax.* 5: nam etsi deus nondum sermonem suum miserat, proinde eum cum ipsa et in ipsa ratione intra semetipsum habebat, tacite cogitando et disponendo secum quae per sermonem mox erat dicturus.

¹⁸³ See the quotation of *Prax.* 5 above: “...seeing that God is [not] discursive (*sermonalis*) from the beginning but is rational (*rationalis*) even before the beginning...”

¹⁸⁴ The scriptural citations in this passage are Gen. 1:3, Prov. 8:22 and 8:27.

distinction between God's *ratio* and that of *sermo*'s in order to highlight the progressive stages whereby the *sermo* may finally be called Son. For Tertullian the identification of the Word as Son is connected to the idea of God sending forth the *sermo* as voice and Son. Unlike Irenaeus, but like Justin, Theophilus, and Hippolytus before him, Tertullian does not advocate the position that the Word is a personal and eternal distinction from the Father.

The topics of divine transcendence and immanence play a central role in Tertullian's use of *sermo*. God exists alone, but God's possession of a rational nature means that God always had His *sermo* in Him. The *sermo*'s sending forth corresponds with the identification of *sermo* as Son. Tertullian identifies the Word as voice strictly with the act of the *sermo*'s exteriorization. He does not utilize the term for voice to identify the *sermo* as a distinct figure from the Father.¹⁸⁵ The Word becomes complete Son and person upon being sent forth as the voice of creation.¹⁸⁶ The Word was always in the Father and became distinguishable as the Son upon being sent forth as the creative voice/sound.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Foster adds, "It is indeed significant that the noted church apologist opts for the Latin *sermo* (Discourse) instead of *verbum* (word), implying that God mentally discourses with Himself in eternity and does not simply articulate a mere word while subsisting as the sole personal agent in existence," *Angelomorphic Christology*, 54. Compare the comments here with those by Evans cited above, in which he discusses Tertullian's choice of *sermo* as opposed to *verbum*. Although I think Evans is correct in his depiction of the origins of *sermo* in Tertullian's writing, the theological content of Foster's interpretation also seems likely to me.

¹⁸⁶ Simonetti notes, "[Tertullian] transfers to the Latin *persona* the meaning which Hippolytus had given to the Greek *prosôpon*, making it, that is, an expression of the individuality of the Father and the Son within the one divinity," in "The Beginnings of Theological Reflection," 213.

¹⁸⁷ Daniélou connects Tertullian's description of the Word's exteriorization for the purpose of creation to the entire Christian tradition prior to Nicaea. He writes, "It cannot be disputed that Tertullian belongs to a theological world in which the begetting of the Son was linked to the creation of the universe. It was only after the Council of Nicaea that the theology of the Trinity was set free from all connection with cosmology, a development for which, it must be admitted, we are indebted to what was valid in the thought of monarchians such as Praxeas," *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 366. Although I agree with the first portion of this quotation, I am not convinced by Daniélou's claim that monarchian theology was the catalyst for such a development in Trinitarian thought, and he does not provide an extended treatment demonstrating such an influence.

Pollard offers a persuasive evaluation of Tertullian's Word Christology as confused and at odds with his presentation of the relationship between the Father and the Son.¹⁸⁸ He acknowledges that Tertullian shows signs that he is attempting to include some form of eternal multiplicity in God. However, Pollard concludes that Tertullian's Word Christology fails to specifically account for the personal distinction in his internal description of God. Other scholars contend that Tertullian denies outright the distinct personhood of the Word prior to His generation as the creator.¹⁸⁹ Evans challenged this position.¹⁹⁰ I am of the opinion that Tertullian's Word Christology does not fully express the eternal distinction of the Word and shows some disconnect with his theological terminology related to divine Fatherhood and Sonship. In regard to the Word's distinction from the Father, Tertullian appears to be indebted to the Two-stage Logos

¹⁸⁸ Pollard discusses Tertullian's identification of *ratio* as the substance of *sermo* and also the connection between the later identification of the Son as the *sermo*. He correctly points out that Tertullian does not make this classification permanent—the Father becomes Father only when the Son becomes Son through external generation. Tertullian goes back on these ideas by later associating *ratio* and *sermo* with Son. See Pollard, *Johannine Christology*, 58-71. Daniélou comes to a similar conclusion, writing, "The Son and the Spirit are distinguished, therefore, from the Father in that they have their own subsistent being, which is not, however, based on their eternal specific individuality, but rather on their function in relation to God's creation. Tertullian does not manage to get beyond the combination of a modalism with regard to the distinctness of the individual persons and a subordinationism with regard to their existential plurality," *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 364.

¹⁸⁹ Benjamin B. Warfield describes this common interpretation of Tertullian: "In this case, while certainly he would take the personal distinctions seriously, he might be supposed not to look upon them as rooted essentially in the very being of God. God in Himself would be conceived as a monad: God flowing out to create the world and to uphold and govern it, as becoming for these purposes a triad," *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970 originally 1930), 48. He attributes these views to Dorner, Hagemann, Harnack, and Stier. Roy Kearsley provides a more recent argument of this view. He identifies *Prax.* as evidence that the Word was not distinct from the Father prior to being sent forth for creation. Kearsley first notes that Tertullian probably knew Irenaeus' rejection of a Two-stage theory, but then he adds, "Although probably concurring with the belief of Irenaeus that the Word was always with the Father..., Tertullian nevertheless also fell heir to the economic and 'temporalist' atmosphere which pervaded second century speculation on the Logos. *Adv Prax* 7, for instance, provides an example. The 'nativity of the Word' coincides with the creation fiat. Here God generates the Word for action and the Word advances to distinct subsistence," Kearsley, *Tertullian's Theology of Divine Power* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1998), 57.

¹⁹⁰ Evans writes, "Tertullian does not really think that the Father ever existed without the Son: as he says almost immediately, *ceterum ne tunc quidem solus*. But he is unable to rid himself of the idea of a priority of the Father, at least in thought, or to dissociate it from some sort of time sequence," *Tertullian's Treatise*, 211.

Christologies seen expressed by Justin, Theophilus, Hippolytus, and the author the of *Noet*.

Tertullian also expands on the topic of the Father and Son sharing the divine substance by adding a Trinitarian interpretation to some of the traditional metaphors used to express the natural relation between divine figures discussed already.¹⁹¹ The Son is the ground shoot, river, and beam, while (or since) the Father is the root, spring, and sun.¹⁹²

Tertullian states,

But where there is a second <one> there are two, and where there is a third there are three. For the Spirit is third with God and <his> Son, as the fruit out of the shoot is third from the root, and the irrigation canal out of the river third from the spring, and the illumination point out of the beam third from the sun: yet in no respect is he alienated from that origin from which he derives his proper attributes. In this way the Trinity, proceeding by intermingled and connected degrees from the Father, in no respect challenges the monarchy, while it conserves the quality of the economy. [*Prax.* 8]

This passage, and others in which Tertullian describes the relationship between the persons of the Trinity,¹⁹³ demonstrates that Tertullian saw the logical need for extending the metaphors of shared substance to the Holy Spirit.¹⁹⁴ He also makes the explicit point

¹⁹¹ See my discussion of Tertullian's classification of God's substance as spirit in the section "Rejecting God's *substantia* as *spiritus*: *Trin.* 7.1.9" in chapter 2 above. Simonetti comments about Tertullian's idea of spirit in *Prax.* with: "The unity of the three persons is ensured not only by their possession of one power, as in Hippolytus, but also by their oneness in substance (2,4). This single substance is conceived by Tertullian after the manner of the Stoics, that is, as a tenuously material spirit (7,7-8), of which the Father is the totality and the Son a part (9,2)," "The Beginnings of Theological Reflection," 213.

¹⁹² *Prax.* 8.

¹⁹³ See for example the often commented upon passage in *Prax.* 9 in which Tertullian states, "For look now, I say that the Father is one, and the son another, and the Spirit another...not however that the Son is other than the Father by diversity, but by distribution, not by division but by distinction, because the Father is not identical with the Son, they even being numerically one and another."

¹⁹⁴ Although *Noet.* speaks of the Spirit as a third, it never calls the Spirit a person (*prosopon*) as the Father and Son are described. Tertullian rejects the description of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one person. See *Prax.* 12: "And if he himself is God, as John says—*the Word was God*—you have two, one commanding a thing to be made, another making it. But how you must understand 'another' I have already professed, in the sense of person, not of substance, for distinctiveness, not for division. Yet although I always maintain one substance in three who cohere, I must still, as a necessary consequence of the meaning <of the passage>, say that he who commands is other than he who makes. For he would not be commanding if he himself were making while commanding things to be made. Yet he did command

of attempting to harmonize two seemingly competing ways of speaking about God—through his discussion of the monarchy and economy of God.

McGowan convincingly argues that the importance of the metaphors in Tertullian's thinking lies in the connection of the metaphors to the topics of transcendence and immanence.¹⁹⁵ Tertullian's comparison to the Father as root, spring, and sun, shows his desire to maintain the emphasis on the Father's invisibility. The Son as shoot, river, and beam of sun, along with the Spirit as fruit, irrigation canal, and point of illumination, all speak to a visible presence or activity in the world. Tertullian uses the metaphors to articulate an implicit distinction between the Father's transcendence and invisibility and the Son's immanence and visibility.¹⁹⁶

Like some of his predecessors, Tertullian turns to the theophanies to speak about God's immanence and develop the contrast between the Father's invisibility and the Word's visibility. He argues that the theophanies offer direct evidence of the distinction of the Father and Son's attributes. After recounting Moses' theophanic experiences in Exodus 33, Tertullian writes,

We must understand the Father as invisible because of the fullness of his majesty, but must acknowledge the Son as visible because of the enumeration of his derivation, just as we may not look upon the sun in respect of the total of its substance which is in the sky, though we can with our eyes bear its beam because

<them to be made> by him, since he would not have commanded himself if he had been one <alone>: or he would have made them without command, for he would not have waited to command himself."

¹⁹⁵ McGowan, "God in Early Latin Theology," 76-78.

¹⁹⁶ McGowan links Tertullian's emphasis on the issue of visibility/invisibility to the absence in *Prax.* of the familiar torch-from-torch analogy seen in previous authors. McGowan writes, "[The torch] metaphor does not work in this schema, since one torch is as visible as another, and the properties of each are the same, except for the sequence of lighting. These new and more elaborate metaphorical renderings of divine disposition thus involve not just a third stage of general differentiation within a sort of unity, but a more specific set of Trinitarian relations and qualities beyond those conveyed by the *topoi* of Justin and Hippolytus," *Ibid.* 75-76.

of the moderation of the assignment which from thence reaches out to the earth.
[*Prax.* 14]¹⁹⁷

Tertullian's Trinitarian theology depends on the insistence of shared substance, but he nuances this concept by speaking of the Son's distinction from the Father based on the Son's nature of being derived from the Father. Some of Tertullian's other statements clarify this idea. In one example, Tertullian writes, "For the Father is the whole substance, while the Son is an outflow and assignment of the whole, as he himself professes, *Because my Father is greater than I.*"¹⁹⁸ In short, Tertullian presents the Son's derivation from the Father as offering an essential component to his understanding of divine immanence.¹⁹⁹

Tertullian also explicitly treats immanence in relation to the difference in attributes of the Father and Son. For example, he points to passages such as Exodus 33:20 (If a man sees my face he shall not live) and John 1:18 (No one has seen God at any time) to contrast the permanent invisibility of the Father with the visibility and immanence of the Word.²⁰⁰ Other writers, such as Irenaeus, spoke of the visible God in terms of the Incarnation. Tertullian, however, argues that the Word's derivation from the

¹⁹⁷ Et consequens erit ut invisibilem patrem intellegamus pro plenitudine maiestatis, visibilem vero filium agnoscamus pro modulo derivationis, sicut nec solem nobis contemplari licet quantum ad ipsam substantiae summam quae est in caelis, radium autem eius toleramus oculis pro temperatura portionis quae in terram inde porrigitur.

¹⁹⁸ *Prax.* 9, quoting John 14:28: pater enim tota substantia est, filius vero, derivatio totius et portio, sicut ipse profitetur, Quia pater maior me est.

¹⁹⁹ *Prax.* 2 states that the Father, Son, and Spirit are three, "not in condition [*statu*], but in degree [*gradu*]; not in substance [*substantia*], but in form [*forma*]; not in power [*potestate*], but in aspect [*specie*]; yet of one substance, and of one condition, and of one power, inasmuch as He is one God, from whom these degrees and forms and aspects are reckoned, under the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (trans. Holmes, ANF 3, 598).

²⁰⁰ In *Prax.* 14, Tertullian admits that the Son, "also on his own account is, as Word and Spirit, invisible even now by the quality of his substance, but that he was visible before the incarnation." While this is something that Irenaeus is willing to affirm, Tertullian sees this concession as playing into the hands of those who will not maintain a distinction between the Father and the Son. His emphasis is on the fact that the Word becomes visible in one degree or another upon generation. For Tertullian, the distinction with the Father is that He never does since creation cannot but be destroyed in such circumstances.

Father is itself a basis for understanding the Son's visibility. Although Tertullian asserts the common and shared substance of the Father, Son, and Spirit, the distinction between the Father's invisibility and the Son's visibility has led numerous scholars to question Tertullian's desire to coherently avoid ontological subordination.²⁰¹

Tertullian connects divine immanence with visibility and affirms God's constant contact with the world from the moment of creation. He likewise builds on ideas seen in previous authors, such as the identification of the Word as the agent of creation.²⁰² In fact, Tertullian connects his understanding of the Word as the agent of creation with the activity of the visible God: "And think not that solely the works of the world were made by the Son, but those also which from then on were performed by God."²⁰³ According to Tertullian, the Word creates and continues to work God's will in creation precisely because he shares the same divine nature with the transcendent Father.²⁰⁴ The foregoing sets the stage for Tertullian to describe the event of the Incarnation as the fulfillment of God's immanence.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ For an example of this, see Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise*, 217. Cf. Kearsley, *Tertullian's Theology*, 55, who addresses Evans' argument and adds, "As it happens, it does not matter a great deal to an understanding of Tertullian's Trinitarian formulation whether Evans is right on this score or not, since most commentators are agreed that Tertullian is heir to the traditional Logos conceptuality, which in his hands undergoes no radical change to exclude subordinationist overtones." Kearsley's point is exactly the reason that scholars such as Pollard argue that Tertullian's use of a Logos theology does not harmonize with his eventual embrace of a theology based upon the relationship between the Son and the Father. See Pollard, *Johannine Christology*, 62-66.

²⁰² According to the quotation of *Prax.* 7, cited above, creation occurs because the Word is sent forth for this very purpose.

²⁰³ *Prax.* 16.

²⁰⁴ Kearsley looks at numerous texts by Tertullian and comments, "First, the incarnation aims at a new creation. Secondly, this achievement ranks in power with the original *creatio ex nihilo*. Thirdly, the Word of God assumes in this renovating operation his unique position and role in the original creation," *Tertullian's Theology*, 80.

²⁰⁵ So Grillmeier states, "The Father is the guarantee of the unity of God, of the *monarchia*. The Son is assigned the second and the Spirit the third place. Here Tertullian is thinking not of a purely static threeness within God, the metaphysical Trinity, but of an economic, organic, dynamic threeness. I.e. for him the second and the third persons proceed from the *unitas substantiae* because they have a task to fulfill. Only the Father remains completely transcendent," *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 120.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates the variety of methods for speaking about divine transcendence and immanence as well as the description of the Word's generation in light of these topics. I have shown in this chapter that the Word Christology tradition does not develop in a clear path on the way to later standards of orthodoxy. We can look again, for instance to the Single and Two-stage Logos theories. Even though Irenaeus' Single-stage theory looks as if it attempts to articulate the Son's eternal distinction, this was not a model employed by Hippolytus, Tertullian, or even Novatian.

Scholars often take note of overtones and undertones of ontological subordinationism which accompany formulations of the Word becoming distinct in the Two-stage Logos model. This model concerns the presumption that the Word exists originally (somehow) in the Father. At some point, however, the Word is brought out of the Father for the purpose of creation. The uncertainty regarding the distinctions in nature between the Father and Son (such as visibility and invisibility) can only be asked in light of the theological developments based on early Word traditions and Scripture, as well as the influence of theological philosophy known to the authors I discuss above. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that Novatian's reading of the Word Christology tradition did not mean that he wanted to conform his own theology to the teachings which scholars take to be advancements towards later orthodox formulations, such as Tertullian's in *Prax*.

In the next two chapters, my analysis of Novatian's Word Christology will focus on the arguments he uses to declare the Son's divinity. I will also look at the statements Novatian makes by which we can interpret the ontological relationship between the

Father and the Son. The current chapter outlines the ontological considerations and affirmations about the unique Supreme God and how those affirmations play a complex role in individual theological systems. What we cannot say is that the Word Christologies on which Novatian relied presented a consistent teaching about the Father and Son's ontological equality. I will present Novatian's theology of the Son as a response and engagement with the sources of the Word Christology tradition discussed above. Furthermore, my presentation of Novatian's theology of the Son would be impossible without my earlier analysis of Novatian's articulation of the transcendence, supremacy, and uniqueness of the Father and His attributes.

Chapter Six: Arguments for the Son's Divinity

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined the development of the Word theology tradition and discussed the Word Christologies influential to Novatian's *Trin.* These Word traditions provided a framework through which philosophers, Jews, and Christians chose to speak about divine transcendence and immanence. Furthermore, these traditions were also used to argue for the Word's divine nature while maintaining the Father's supremacy.¹

By reiterating two conclusions in regard to the Word Christology examples presented in chapter 5, I will contextualize my analysis of Novatian's theology of the Son. First, the Son's ontological equality with the Father was not explicitly stated by most of Novatian's predecessors. Second, it is neither helpful nor accurate to frame the Word Christology tradition as developing in a linear, chronological progression according to doctrinal concerns of later centuries.² With these points in mind, I will contend that we can find much in common between Novatian's understanding of the Son's divinity and those articulations of the Word Christology suggesting the Son's ontological subordination.³

¹ The Middle Platonic examples I pointed to in chapters 1 and 5 describe a Supreme God and other divine figures sharing in divine attributes while showing concern for maintaining various teachings about transcendence and immanence. For a discussion of Platonists, especially Numenius on the Demiurge as second God, see Mark J. Edwards, "On the Platonic Schooling of Justin Martyr," *JTS* 42:1 (1991), 27-8. Edwards' also provides a helpful discussion of Plotinus regarding emanations.

² Even though much of Tertullian's terminology and ideas were taken over by the Western Church, we can also note that Irenaeus' teachings concerning the generation of the Son and also the shared attributes of the Father and the Son are equally integral to the later, orthodox position.

³ Justin's theology of the Father and his understanding of the Son is an example of this kind of articulation. However, I also believe that Tertullian's early works, such as his *Herm.*, similarly make statements about the Father which would be seen by Novatian as supporting ontological inequality. Cf.

I will begin this chapter by pointing out the epistemological role Scripture plays in Novatian's assertion that the Son/Word is God. Then I will describe Novatian's six primary arguments for calling the Son "God," according to my reading of *Trin.*⁴ They include: 1) the Son is before the world and all things, 2) all things are through the Word, 3) the Word performs the Works of God, 4) the Word is obedient to the Father, 5) the Word is the minister of the Father's will, as well as 6) the Son deserves to be identified as "God" more than angels and human beings. Novatian treats these topics as essential both for proving that the Son is God and for identifying the Son's personal distinction from the Father. He also combines some of these arguments into single passages, which suggests that he sees them as logically interrelated.⁵

Novatian's arguments for calling the Son "God," which I present in this chapter, do not focus on the Son's divine ontology as such. Although some of Novatian's arguments presented below have implications regarding the Son's divine nature, he does

DeSimone who states, "We must bear in mind that Novatian is energetically defending against the Gnostics, Docetists, Adoptionists, and Sebellianists. He is not concerned with irrelevant, subtle questions. He upholds the real human nature and divinity of Christ. He strives to place in bold relief the posteriority of the Son, insofar as His origin is concerned, so that he can better defend the personal distinction of the Father and the Son. He has been charged with subordinationism. Novatian, however, did not make use of explicit formulas to formally defend subordinationism," *On the Trinity*, 19. Part of my justification for writing chapters 1 and 5 includes the necessity of rebutting questionable or unproven assumptions in the literature on Novatian. In DeSimone's case, I take his last sentence to be highly misleading. Novatian's formulations about the Father's unique attributes and his later and explicit exclusion of the Son from those formulations function in exactly the way DeSimone denies.

⁴ Novatian mentions other proofs for Christ's divinity which I do not discuss in this chapter. These arguments derive from Scripture proof texts, and they are important in so far as they demonstrate Novatian's belief that Scripture often points to revelations about the divinity of Christ. For example, two such proofs for Christ's divinity are found in *Trin.* 13.6. In that passage, Novatian argues that Christ's ability to see the secrets of the heart as well as his ability to forgive sins necessitates his divinity. The first argument appears to be a spiritual power which Tertullian at least views as similarly applicable to angels, a topic I discuss below. The second argument fits with the subject of the Father sharing His power with the Son, which I also treat below. Ultimately, those arguments made by Novatian which I do not specifically treat have some basis of justification in those topics which I do analyze.

⁵ See for example *Trin.* 26.20 where he combines several of them: "For throughout the Divine Scripture of the Old, as well as the New Testament, He [Jesus] is shown to us as born of the Father, one through (*per*) whom 'all things were made, and without whom nothing was made,' who has ever been obedient (*oboedierit*) to the Father and still obeys (*oboediat*). He is also revealed to us as having power (*potestatem*) over all things, power, however, that has been given, that has been granted and conferred upon Him by His own Father."

not often take the opportunity to describe the attributes of the Son's divinity as compared with the attributes of the Father's. In chapter 7, I will discuss Novatian's arguments which do directly engage with such comparisons in order to confirm that Novatian's theology of the Son incorporates the idea of the Son's ontological subordination to the Father. The six topics I discuss below will reveal that Novatian's rationale concerning the classification of the Son as God neither begins with nor relies on the assertion of equality with the Father. Since many of these topics are overlooked in the secondary literature, the current chapter addresses the scholarly failure to fully contextualize and analyze Novatian's logic for asserting the Son's identification as "God."⁶ Novatian does not make ontological arguments of equality between the Son and the Father the basis for calling the Son "God" because, I believe, he does not teach that the Son is ontologically equal with the Father.

My references to Novatian's "Word Christology" will focus on the Son's generation from and relationship with the Father. His justification for calling the Son the "Word" most often involves the fact that Scriptures assert this connection, especially those made in the Gospel of John.⁷ Novatian offers little insight into his reasons for connecting the terms "Son" and "Word." Therefore, when I speak about Novatian's Word Christology or his theological dependence on the Word Christology in authors such as Justin, I will be directing my comments towards the theological connections made

⁶ Novatian does not suggest that there is a difference between talking about the Son as God (*deus*) or as divine (*divinitas*). In the majority of cases, he simply says that the Son or Word is rightfully called God. Discerning what he means by this term is the question at hand in both chapters 6 and 7.

⁷ Novatian also mentions Ps. 45:1 in *Trin.* 13.1, 15.6, and 17.3 as proof that the Word which the Father speaks is the Son. I will point out below that Novatian, in a few passages, refers to the connection between the Word and the creative activity of God. However, he does not use this as a principle, or even clear, argument for calling the Son the "Word."

between the Father and the Son. I will then analyze the implications this relationship has to Novatian's expression of divine transcendence and immanence.

The Role of Scripture

Novatian begins his discussion of the Son in *Trin.* 9 by pointing to the *regula*:
 “The same Rule of truth teaches us, after we believe in the Father, to believe also in the Son of God, Christ Jesus, the Lord Our God, nevertheless the Son of God.”⁸ He then affirms the central role of scripture in guaranteeing knowledge of the Son:

For we read that this Jesus Christ, the Son, I repeat, of this God, was not only promised in the Old Testament, but also has been manifested in the New Testament, fulfilling the shadows and types of all the prophecies concerning the presence of His Incarnate Truth. [*Trin.* 9.2]⁹

Novatian quotes texts from Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and the Psalms in order to show that Jesus is both the Son of God and that God foretold the Incarnation to His people.¹⁰ Like Justin, Novatian connects the legitimacy of the Old Testament to the fulfillment of God's prophecies in the Son's appearance and activities in the New Testament.¹¹ This God who appears in the creation cannot be the Father, but rather must be the Son.¹²

⁸ *Trin.* 9.1.

⁹ Hunc enim Iesum Christum, iterum dicam huius Dei Filium, et in ueteri testamento legimus esse repromissum et in nouo testamento animaduertimus exhibitum, omnium sacramentorum umbras et figures de praesentia corporatae ueritatis implentem.

¹⁰ *Trin.* 9.2-9 recounts fulfilled prophecies from Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Hosea, and Psalms. See my discussion of Justin in chapter 5 for a summary of similar arguments.

¹¹ Papandrea notes, “In his choice of passages, Novatian shows a marked preoccupation with Christological texts. Of his over 140 references to New Testament passages in the *De Trinitate*, a full 80% have Christological implications,” *Trinitarian Theology*, 295.

¹² See, for example, Novatian's explanation of Hosea 1:7 in *Trin.* 12.2: “If God says that He will save them by God (Hosea 1:7) and if God does not save except by Christ, then why should man hesitate to call Christ God when he realizes that the Father declares, through the Scriptures, that He is God. In fact, if God the Father can not save, except by God, no one can be save by God the Father, unless he has acknowledged that Christ is God, in whom and through whom the Father promises to grant salvation.”

Throughout *Trin.*, Novatian discusses the theophanies in terms of how they distinguish the Son from the Father, while also designating the Son as God. He draws on principles of his philosophical theology to reject the Father's ability to appear on earth. For example, Novatian explains Habakkuk's prophecy that God will come from the South (Hab. 3:3) by declaring that the Son must be the subject of the text:

If they say that God the Father almighty came, then God the Father came from a place (*loco*); consequently, He is also enclosed by a place and contained with the limits of some abode...If Christ, who is also called God by the Scriptures, was born in Bethlehem, which geographically faces towards the South, then this God is rightly described as coming from the South, because it was foreseen that He would come from Bethlehem. [*Trin.* 12.7-8]¹³

According to Novatian, passages, such as the one from Habakkuk, say that the subject identified as God interacts with the world in a way impossible to the Father.¹⁴ He concludes that the text must be referring to the Son, and in so doing, follows a method of interpretation seen among some of his Christian predecessors.¹⁵

In the above instance, Novatian calls the Son "God" based on his philosophic and theological presentation of the Father's nature. His approach to explaining statements about the Son in theophanies is twofold. First, he begins with the scriptural affirmation that the Son is God.¹⁶ Second, he relies on the theological conviction that the transcendent Father must be logically limited from certain kinds of contact with

¹³ See my discussion of this passage in the section on topological theology in chapter 4 and my discussion of it below. See also Mattei's treatment of some of these themes in his discussion of theophanies as they relate to the Father as invisible and the Son as visible, "*De Trinitate* 31," 205-208.

¹⁴ With a similar set of exegetical principles, Novatian explains the theophany with Hagar in Gen. 21, in *Trin.* 18.18-22. Novatian concludes in *Trin.* 18.22, "Now, although all this [the interaction between God and Hagar] cannot be appropriately and suitably applied to the Father, who is only God, it can, however, be appropriately applied to Christ who has been proclaimed not only God but an angel also."

¹⁵ See chapter 5 for quotations of Justin's *Dial.* 127 and Theophilus' *Autol.* 2.3 and 2.22, which follow a logic similar to Novatian's.

¹⁶ See, for example, *Trin.* 30.2. Papandrea provides a list of the statements which Novatian makes affirming the divinity of the Son with corresponding references to Novatian's citations of Scripture, *Trinitarian Theology*, 306-310. See also DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 82-91 for a discussion of Novatian's use of Scripture.

creation.¹⁷ Novatian describes the Father as creator of the world with allusions to, and some citations of, Genesis and the Psalms.¹⁸ Without effort, he couples Scripture with philosophical language of negative theology related to the Supreme God.¹⁹ Novatian explains Romans 1:20 by stating,

“Since we cannot see Him with the sight of our eyes, we learn to know Him from the greatness, the power, and the majesty of His works. ‘For since the creation of the world,’ says the Apostle, ‘His invisible attributes are clearly seen—His everlasting power also and divinity—being understood through the things that are made.’ Thus the human mind, learning to know the hidden things from those which are manifest, may consider in spirit the greatness of the Maker from the greatness of His works which it sees with the eyes of the mind.” [*Trin.* 3.6]

¹⁷ The structure of Novatian’s presentation of the Son does not lend itself to a comparable organization which scholars find in Novatian’s structural presentation of the Father. See for example, Dunn who comments, “While the first chapter considers the works of God, the remaining seven chapters of this first section consider the nature of God. Chapters 2 and 4 do so from a philosophical or rational perspective while chapters 3 and 5 to 8 do so from Scripture,” “Diversity and Unity,” 392. Dunn also points out that he diverges from DeSimone who took *Trin.* 4 as an argument from Scripture. Dunn reads *Trin.* 4 as primarily influenced by philosophical arguments.

¹⁸ Because he bases his argument on the truthfulness of the Jewish Scriptures, he counters the claims of groups such as the Sebellians, Marcionites, and Valentinians, whose Scriptural interpretations Novatian later claims to be wrong by ignorance or malice. In *Trin.* 30.3, Novatian notes that “the heretics...have drawn from Scripture the elements and the reasons for their error and perversity.” He then states in 30.7, “However, neither do the Holy Scriptures nor do we afford them any ground for their present ruin and blindness, because they either will not, or cannot, see what has been so clearly laid down on the open page of the Divine Writings.” Dunn rejects DeSimone’s suggestion that Novatian specifically seeks to target Marcionites in *Trin.* 10 in “Diversity and Unity,” 394. I agree with Dunn in so far as he accepts the probability that Novatian’s arguments deny Marcion’s theology by using the Old Testament as authoritative.

¹⁹ See my discussion of this topic in chapter 3. Note also that *Trin.* 5-7 is Novatian’s attempt to harmonize his theology with his previous presentation of the Father’s transcendence and attributes by offering non-anthropomorphic and non-literal interpretations of Scripture passages about God and His attributes. DeSimone and Dunn both see *Trin.* 1 as an “argument for the existence of God from design,” Dunn, “Diversity and Unity,” 392 n. 26; DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 60. This is correct, as long as we keep in mind the idea that the Father designs man and the world in such a way that theological epistemology is possible at all. Novatian’s ability to make such an easy transition can be accounted for by a lack of theological controversy concerning his description of the Father. Not only were the Marcionites and Valentinians less of a theological threat during his time, but Novatian’s intellectual climate, which included non-Christian philosophical works, also contained an array of uncontroversial approaches for affirming the highest God’s supremacy and transcendence. Sabellians and the humanistic monarchians shared, in some respect, the concern for God’s transcendent supremacy. Even in the case of Callistus’ modified Sabellianism, the Father’s “suffering” did not interfere with His transcendence. Heine writes, “The Roman modalists appear to have denied the death of deity on the cross as strongly as the Logos theologians did. What Callistus and the Roman modalists appear to have argued was that the Son had no divine substance distinct from the Father, for they were both one spirit (and λόγος ἐνδιήθετος) in substance. As Son, however, he differed from the Father in having the substance flesh. The latter admitted him to the human world of suffering and death. Because the Father, as spirit, was united with the flesh and interacted with it, he also partook of the experiences of the Son, though this partaking was limited by the respective capabilities of spirit and flesh,” “Christology of Callistus,” 77-78.

Novatian argues that Scriptural revelation and natural revelation jointly guide human beings to appreciate the Supreme Father.

Unlike the Father, the Son's divinity (or existence) is not known by the human experience of natural revelation.²⁰ To speak about the Son, Novatian begins by pointing to references in Scripture to another God besides the Father. He argues that Jesus fulfills the prophecies, and that this subject, whether referred to as Jesus, Word, or Christ, is also called "God." In other words, Novatian looks to instances in which the Scriptures identify a subject as God, yet ones which also are inconsistent with his theology of the Father. In those cases, Novatian declares that the divine subject must be the Son.

The evidence of Scripture stands at the heart of Novatian's knowledge about the Son. From the time of Justin, Word Christologies included the idea that the interaction between man and God's reason was linked by some activity of the Word. This led to statements regarding the incipient knowledge about the Word which Novatian seems to either discount or simply not acknowledge. Although Novatian treats Scripture as the basis for his identification of the Son with divinity, such an identification does little to fill out the meaning of how Novatian understands the nature of the Son's divinity. What Novatian does tell us about the Son's nature has as much to do with the distinction he

²⁰ Novatian's position on this is not entirely clear to me. Word Christologies beginning at least with Justin appealed to the universality of the Word's presence in a way suggestive of some inherent universal knowledge of the Word. Recall the quotation of *1 Apol.* 59 which I quoted in chapter 5. I suspect that Novatian rejects this theological tradition. As I demonstrated in chapter 3, his theological epistemology relies on the activity of the Supreme God. Even natural revelation is but an expression of the revelation available because of the structure of the universe and the structure of man's nature. In regard to knowledge about the Word, Novatian always begins with the fulfillment of biblical revelation.

makes between the Son's attributes and the Father's,²¹ such as can be seen in his exegesis of Habukkuk.

The Word is before the World

In *Trin.* 11, Novatian combines numerous Scriptural passages which, he argues, proclaim the divinity and humanity of Jesus. He insists in *Trin.* 11.8 that the Word “as Man, is born after the world existed, so, as God, is He shown to have existed before the world (*ante mundum*).” In the notes to his translation, DeSimone suggests that Novatian has in mind John 17:5 for this passage.²² I think this is likely since Novatian quotes this verse in three separate places in *Trin.*²³ *Trin.* 11.8 is one of the numerous instances in which Novatian makes the Son's temporal priority a central feature in his logic of the Son's divinity.

Later, when Novatian cites John 17:5 in *Trin.* 16.6, he treats the subject of the Son's temporal priority at greater length, writing,

If Christ is only man, how does He say: “And now glorify Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was”? If He had glory with God before the world (*ante mundum*) was and retained His glory with the Father, certainly He existed before the world. For He could not have had this glory (*gloriam*) unless He had existed before the world, so as to keep the glory (*gloriam*). No one who possesses anything can have anything unless He exists before (*ante*) it. [*Trin.* 16.6]²⁴

²¹ Amann, “Novatien et novatianisme,” 823-824; Keilbach, “Divinitas Filii,” 208; Fausset, *Novatiani Romanae*, xlvii-xlviii.

²² “And now, Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made.” (*Et nunc honorifica me gloria quam habebam apud te prius quam mundus esset.*)

²³ See *Trin.* 13.4, 16.6, and 26.15. I am departing somewhat from DeSimone who focuses on Novatian's arguments that Christ existed before the Incarnation. While this is certainly a main feature of Novatian's argument, I think the principle of the Son's temporal priority over the world plays a more distinct role than DeSimone's organization allows. See DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 83-86.

²⁴ Si homo tantummodo Christus, quomodo dicit : *Et nunc honorifica me gloria quam habebam apud te priusquam mundus esset?* Si antequam mundus esset gloriam habuit apud Deum et claritatem tenuit apud Patrem, ante mundum fuit; nec enim habuisset gloriam, nisi ipse prius fuisset, qui gloriam posset tenere. Nemo enim habere aliquid poterit, nisi ante ipse fuerit qui aliquid tenet. See also *Trin.* 13.5: “He [the Word] ascends with His spouse, the flesh, to the same place from which He had descended

The Word's personal existence prior to creation accounts for the Word's preeminence or rank,²⁵ which Novatian describes with the term *gloria*.²⁶ Unfortunately, Novatian does not explain his understanding of glory beyond the implication that temporal priority indicates preeminence or rank.²⁷

Later, Novatian cites Col. 1:15 as part of his argument that Christ is called God on the basis of his temporal rank:²⁸

Now, if Christ is called by the Apostle "the firstborn of all creatures" (*primogenitus omnis creaturae*), how could He be the firstborn of all creatures unless—in virtue of His divinity (*diuinitatem*)—He came forth (*processit*), as the Word from the Father before (*ante*) every creature? [*Trin.* 21.4]²⁹

without the flesh and receives not that glory which He is shown to have had before the creation of the world. This proves, without the least doubt, that He is God."

²⁵ In *Trin.* 16.8-9, Novatian declares that Christ would be less than (*minor*) the patriarchs if he were to come temporally after them. See also *Trin.* 11.8: "In the same manner that He, as Man, was after (*post*) many, He was, as God, before (*ante*) all men. In the same manner that He, as Man, was lower in rank (*inferior*) than the other, as God He was greater (*maior*) than all."

²⁶ See also *Trin.* 13.6 in which Novatian says that the world's creation through Christ (meaning, therefore, that Christ exists before the creation of the world) proves the glory (*gloria*) and authority (*auctoritas*) of Christ's divinity (*divinitas*). I think that part of Novatian's logic comes from his citation of John 1:30 in *Trin.* 14.11. "If Christ is only man," Novatian writes, "how does John the Baptist bear witness of Him when he says: 'He who comes after me was made before me, for He was before me'?" (*Si homo tantummodo Christus, quomodo Ioannes Baptista testatur et dicit: qui post me uenit, ante me factus est, quia prior me fuit.*) I am unaware of any instances in which John 1:30 appears in Novatian's primary Christian sources.

²⁷ Although Novatian identifies (without explanation) the term *gloria* with God the Father (*Trin.* 3.7; 18.3; 22.12) and also with the Word (*Trin.* 16.6 and perhaps 22.1), he also uses it to describe simple honor and rank in *Trin.* 16.8-9. Novatian, however, does reject the possibility that Christ's glory is one of predestination. Of *Trin.* 16.6, DeSimone notes, "Novatian is contending with the Artemonites, who maintained that Jesus Christ was God only by predestination," *Treatise of Novatian*, 63, n. 6. See also Papandrea who agrees with DeSimone on this point, *Trinitarian Theology*, 339 n. 188. In *The Church History* 5.28, Eusebius mentions only that the Artemonites regarded Jesus as a mere man. In regard to the Son and predestination, Novatian responds to those making the suggestion by claiming that other human beings, such as Adam, Abel, and Abraham, would have to be considered greater than Christ. They would both be predestined to glory before him and also live before him. Novatian's principle is clear: if Christ begins a personal existence after other men, then he is somehow less than them due to his lack of temporal priority. Novatian counters every rejection of this principle by stating the logical necessity of Christ's personhood *in substantia*, prior to the world. See *Trin.* 16.7 and also Fausset, *Novatiani Romanae*, 58 n. 9 on this point. Novatian's argument, found in *Trin.* 16, works against a theology which identifies Christ's personhood, or subjectivity, with the Incarnation.

²⁸ See also Mattei, "De Trinitate 31," 202-208 for a discussion on the visibility of the Son related to Novatian's citations of Col. 1:15.

²⁹ *Trin.* 21.4: Quodsi et *primogenitus omnis creaturae* ab apostolo dictus sit Christus, quomodo omnis creaturae primogenitus esse potuit, nisi quoniam secundum diuinitatem ante omnem creaturam ex Patre Deo sermo processit?

Novatian acknowledges no difficulty in assigning divinity to the Word, while calling the Word the firstborn of all creatures (*primogenitus omnis creaturae*).³⁰ His reason, in this case, for saying that the Word is divine comes entirely from the Word's temporal rank.³¹

*All Things Are Through the Word: Demiurgic Activity*³²

As shown in chapters 1 and 5, the identification of creative activity with divine nature was common to both the Word Christology traditions and theological philosophy. Based on scriptural witness, Novatian speaks often of the world as coming through (*per*) the Word, who is the agent or instrument of creation.³³ Novatian, however, does not use this demiurgic activity as a justification for calling the Son "Creator."³⁴ This title he reserves exclusively for the Father.³⁵

³⁰ Papandrea translates *primogenitus omnis creaturae* as "the firstborn of all creation." He writes, "As we have seen, Novatian maintains that the preexistence of Christ proves His divine nature. Christ as the 'firstborn' of all creation means that He existed before all creation as the Word of God. This necessarily implies that He existed before humanity, so therefore He cannot be a mere human, He must be divine," *Trinitarian Theology*, 276. I disagree with Papandrea only in that he treats the existence of the Word of God as defined by an eternality equivalent to the Father's.

³¹ Cf. DeSimone who takes the Col. 1:15 reference to Christ as the firstborn as equivalent to eternality, *Treatise of Novatian*, 85. See the next chapter for my discussion of the Son as eternal.

³² See also chapter 7's section, "Stages of the Word," for another aspect of the discussion of how Novatian understands the begetting of the Word as it is tied to creative activity.

³³ Novatian says that Christ is "the Lord and Prince of the whole world, to whom 'all things have been' entrusted and 'granted by His Father,' through (*per*) whom all things were made, all things created (*creata sunt tota*), all things set in order..." (*Trin.* 11.2, modified slightly: *Totius Dominum et principem mundi, cui a suo Patre omnia tradita sunt et cuncta concessa, per quem instituta sunt uniuersa, creata sunt tota, digesta sunt cuncta...*). In this case, Novatian uses the terms for "through" and "created" (*per* and *creatio*) as relating the same idea. All his other statements using *per* in such a context I read in light of the Word's demiurgic activity.

³⁴ DeSimone calls the Son "Creator" in Novatian's theology despite a lack of textual evidence. He states, for example, "Novatian distinguishes the generation of the Word from His procession as Lord and Creator," *On the Trinity*, 17. I think this confuses the issue and underplays the distinctions which Novatian make regarding the Father and the Son. Although the Son is clearly the instrument of creation, scholarship which identifies the Son as the "creator" when interpreting *Trin.* presses Novatian's theology into a vocabulary he chose not to use.

³⁵ See *Trin.* 9.1.

The Gospel of John has a significant influence on Novatian's statements that the world comes through the Word. In *Trin.* 13.2, Novatian connects John 1:3, Col. 1:16, and John 1:10-11 to make this point:

For "All" (*omnia*) works (*opera*) "were made through (*per*) Him, and nothing was made without Him." Indeed, the apostle says, "Whether thrones or authorities, or rulers (*uirtutes*), or powers (*potestas*), visible and invisible...all things exist through (*per*) Him." However this is the Word which "came into His own and His own did not receive Him." For "The world was made through (*per*) Him, and [yet] the world did not know Him." Now this "Word was in the beginning with God, and the Word was God." [*Trin.* 13.2, trans. Papandrea, modified slightly]³⁶

Novatian relies on John 1:3 (the first citation in the quotation above), here and in several places, to prove that God never creates apart from the instrumentality of the Word. Furthermore, we see in this passage that Novatian links demiurgic activity with the Word's temporal priority.

In *Trin.* 13.7 Novatian develops the association of the Word's demiurgic role with the Word's temporal priority over the world,³⁷ in his most extensive and sustained use of John 1:3. The combination of these factors leads to his conclusion that the Word is both God and man:

At this point, therefore, one of two alternatives must be true. Since it is evident that all things were made through (*per*) Christ, either He is before (*ante*) all things, because "all things are through (*per*) Him," and consequently He is God, or else, because He is man, He is after (*post*) all things, and consequently nothing was made through (*per*) Him. But we cannot say that nothing was made through (*per*) Him, since we know that it is written: "All things were made through (*per*) Him." He is not after (*post*) all things; that is, He is not a mere man who is after (*post*) all things for He is also God because God is before (*ante*) all things. He is before (*ante*) all things because "all things are through (*per*) Him"; otherwise, were He only a man, nothing would be through (*per*) Him. On the other hand, if all things were made through (*per*) Him, He would not be a mere man. Were He

³⁶ *Per ipsum enim omnia facta sunt opera et sine ipso factum est nihil. Siue enim, inquit apostolus, throni, siue dominationes, siue uirtutes, siue potestates, uisibilia et inuisibilia, omnia per ipsum constant. Verbum autem hoc illud est, quod in sua uenit, et sui eum non receperunt. Mundus enim per ipsum factus est, et mundus eum non cognouit. Verbum autem hoc erat in principio apud Deum, et Deus erat uerbum.*

³⁷ See also *Trin.* 17.2. and 31.4-5.

merely a man, all things would not be made through (*per*) Him; in fact nothing would be made through (*per*) Him. [*Trin.* 13.7]³⁸

Novatian rejects the idea that Christ was a mere man by making the Word's temporal priority essential to the Word's creative activity; this is seen in his repetitious use of *per*.³⁹ He treats the relationship of the temporal terms *ante* (regarding the Word) and *post* (regarding the world) as the cornerstone of his logic for calling the Word "God." Furthermore, Novatian couples this temporal point with his assertion of the Word's single subjectivity: the Word is the Son who is Jesus Christ.⁴⁰ Novatian feels at liberty to exchange these names at will. His constant insistence on the single subjectivity of the Word as Son and as Jesus counteracts both Sabellianism and humanitarian monarchianism, which denied, respectively, that the Word personally created the world and that the Son Incarnate is the Word.

Although Novatian waits until chapter 9 to explicitly treat the Son,⁴¹ I believe that the first reference to the Son's demiurgic role appears when Novatian describes the activity of the Father. In *Trin.* 3 Novatian exegetes Romans 11:36, which includes the term *per*, by noting the activity of the *verbum*. Novatian writes,

For He [the Father] who surpassed the greatness of thought went beyond the contemplation of the eyes. "Because," he says, "all things are from (*ex*) Him and through (*per*) Him and in (*in*) Him." For indeed all things [exist] by His command, so that they are "from Him", and are created by His word (*uerbo*), so

³⁸ Itaque hoc in loco ex duobus alterum constare debet. Cum enim manifestum sit omnia esse facta per Christum aut ante omnia est, quoniam *omnia per ipsum*, et merito et Deus est, aut quia homo est, post omnia est et merito per ipsum nihil factum est. Sed nihil per ipsum factum esse non possumus dicere, cum animaduertamus *omnia per ipsum facta* esse scriptum. Non ergo post omnia est, id est non homo tantum est, qui post omnia est, sed et Deus, quoniam Deus ante omnia est. Ante omnia est enim, quia *per ipsum omnia*, ne si homo tantum, nihil per ipsum, aut si omnia per ipsum, non homo tantum, quoniam si homo tantum, non omnia per ipsum, immo nihil per ipsum.

³⁹ Fausset describes this section as "not very logically set out," although I am not sure why, *Novatiani Romanae*, 45 n. 2.

⁴⁰ In chapter 5, I provide examples of this same use of names in the works of Justin and Irenaeus.

⁴¹ *Trin.* 9.1: "The same Rule of truth teaches us, after we believe in the Father, to believe also in the Son of God..."

that they are “through Him” (*per*), and everything relies upon His judgment, that while “in Him” [all things] look forward to freedom, corruption having been done away with, [and] in Him [all things] may be seen to be reclaimed. [*Trin.* 3.7, translation Papandrea]⁴²

I am unaware of any of Novatian’s sources using Romans 11:36 to articulate the role of the Son.⁴³ However, a similar verse, Ephesians 4:6, appears in Irenaeus’ *Haer.*⁴⁴ and also *Noet.*⁴⁵ Both authors interpret Paul’s statement that God is above (*super*), through (*per*, *dia* in the case of *Noet.*), and in (*in*) all things by linking it with a Trinitarian explanation. Both also associate the Word with the term for “through.”⁴⁶ In the case of Irenaeus, the affirmation that the Word is “through” all things indicates His continual presence in the Church, while *Noet.* does not clarify whether the attribution of “through all things” relates specifically to demiurgic activity or presence. If Novatian associated Romans 11:36 with the exegetical tradition of Eph. 4:6, as I suspect he does, then he followed the tradition in so far as he associates the term for “through” with the Word, who is the Son. Novatian’s exegesis is unique in his unambiguous identification of “through” as

⁴² Euasit enim oculorum contemplationem qui cogitationis uicit magnitudinem. *Quoniam*, inquit, *ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso sunt omnia*. Nam et imperio eius omnia, ut *ex ipso* sint, et uerbo eius digesta, ut *per ipsum* sint, et in iudicium eius recidunt uniuersa, ut dum *in ipso* expectant libertatem corruptione deposita, in ipsum uideantur esse reuocata.

⁴³ In *Haer.* 1.3.4, Irenaeus says that the Valentinians use this passage to describe the Ogdoad.

⁴⁴ *Haer.* 5.18.2 states, “And thus one God the Father is declared, who is above all, and through all, and in all. The Father is indeed above all, and He is the Head of Christ; but the Word is through all things, and is Himself the Head of the Church; while the Spirit is in us all, and He is the living water, which the Lord grants to those who rightly believe in Him, and love Him, and who know that ‘there is one Father, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.’” In *Haer.* 2.2.5, Irenaeus only refers to the Father when quoting Eph. 4:6: “Now, that this God is the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul the apostle also has declared, [saying,] ‘There is one God, the Father, who is above all, and through all things, and in us all.’ I have indeed proved already that there is only one God.”

⁴⁵ *Noet.* 14.4-5 states, “The Father gives order, the Word performs the work, and is revealed as Son, through whom belief is accorded to the Father. By a harmonious economy the result is a single God. This is because there is one God. For the one who commands is the Father, the one who obeys is the Son, and the one who promotes mutual understandings is the Holy Spirit. He who is Father is over all things, and the Son is through all things, and the Holy Spirit is in all things.”

⁴⁶ *Haer.* and *Noet.* refer to the Father as “above” all things and the Spirit as “in” all things.

representative of demiurgic activity.⁴⁷ As a central argument for the Word's divinity, I pointed out in chapter 5 that demiurgic activity was central to Word Christology, especially in light of Prov. 8:22.

Earlier in this chapter, I noted that Novatian finds his reasons for calling the Son "God" in revelation rather than as part of man's natural epistemological capacities. In contrast to this position, Justin explains Gen. 1:1-3 in *1 Apol.* 59 as describing the agreement between Moses and Plato on the instrumental activity of the Word for creation.⁴⁸ Novatian avoids any explicit connection to philosophical wisdom when positing knowledge of the Word.⁴⁹ Unlike Justin, Novatian focuses entirely on the revelation of Scripture when he alludes to the opening passages of Genesis 1. He notes a long list of God's demiurgic activities, beginning with the creation of light and moves on to the creation of the heavens, waters, land, vegetation, animals, and celestial bodies.

⁴⁷ Note that in *Trin.* 3.7 Novatian exegetes the Latin *in* simply by saying, "and everything relies upon His judgment, that while 'in Him' [all things] look forward to freedom, corruption having been done away with, [and] in Him [all things] may be seen to be reclaimed. My interpretation of the entirety of *Trin.* 3.7 has a bearing on understanding Novatian's doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Although all scholars interested in the topic point out that Novatian avoids calling the Holy Spirit "God," I am familiar with no study which identifies Novatian's alteration of this traditional exegesis of Trinitarian theology, in order to eliminate or downplay the Spirit's role. If we read Novatian's interpretation of Rom. 11:36 as an exegetical reformulation of traditions which exegete Eph. 4:6 (and which he found in his theological sources), then Novatian seems to strip explicit mention of the Holy Spirit from a verse about God's activity. This is further evidence which points to Novatian's unwillingness to speak about God in Trinitarian terms as was seen in *Noet.*, for example.

⁴⁸ See chapter 5's section on Justin for a quotation of this text.

⁴⁹ Tertullian also proposes an analogy for understanding the personal existence of the Word through natural revelation in *Prax* 5: "And that you may understand this the more easily, observe first from yourself, as from the image and likeness of God, how you also have reason within yourself, who are a rational animal not only as having been made by a rational Creator but also as out of his substance having been made a living soul. See how, when you by reason argue silently with yourself, this same action takes place within you, while reason accompanied by discourse meets you at every movement of your thought, at every impression of your consciousness: your every thought is discourse, your every consciousness is reason: you must perforce speak it in your mind, and while you speak it you experience as a partner in conversation that discourse which has in it this very reason by which you speak when you think in company of that <discourse> in speaking by means of which you think. So in a sort of way you have in you as a second <person> discourse by means of which you speak by thinking and by means of which you think by speaking: discourse itself is another than your. How much more completely therefore does this action take place in God whose image and similitude you are authoritatively declared to be, that even while silent he has in himself reason, and in <that> reason discourse."

Novatian concludes, “[Moses] thus makes it clear that no one else was then present with God, on whom could be enjoined the task of executing these works, save Him through (*per*) whom ‘all things were made, and without whom nothing was made.’”⁵⁰ In addition to quoting John 1:3 at the end of the passage, Novatian also quotes it prior to referencing the demiurgic work found in Genesis. For Novatian, only revelation through Scripture allows for the investigation of the Word’s role in demiurgic activity. Since the Word is the instrument of creation, Novatian sees this as ultimately a participation in the will and power of the Father.⁵¹

The Word Performs the Works of God

Novatian places the personal distinction of the Father from the Son at the forefront of his attack on Sabellian theology.⁵² Sabellians could speak about the demiurgic activity of Christ, since they argued that Christ referred to the Father (or the Spirit of the Father) in the human being Jesus.⁵³ Novatian counters this idea by citing scriptural quotations used by his predecessors as proof texts for the distinct subjectivities of Christ (the Son/Word) and the Father. He includes passages from Genesis, Psalms,

⁵⁰ *Trin.* 17.2: non alium ostendit tunc adfuisse Deo cui praeciperenter haec opera ut fierent, nisi eum per quem *facta sunt omnia, et sine quo factum est nihil.*

⁵¹ DeSimone understands Novatian to be emphasizing the unity of divine will between the Father and Son, *Treatise of Novatian*, 92, against Keilbach who takes the instrumentality as evidence of inferiority, “Divinitas Filii,” 207.

⁵² Novatian singles out two groups as his primary theological targets in *Trin.*: the Sabellians and those who claim that Christ was only a man. See *Trin.* 30.3-6. Papandrea and Dunn make a special effort to point out that Novatian would have seen these two groups as polar opposites, which means that Novatian is trying to counter, what he sees as, the two most dangerous groups on either side of his doctrinal position. Both of these traditions employ Scriptural interpretations which Novatian spends a great deal of time refuting. See also Pollard, “The Exegesis of John 10:30,” 334-39 (especially 338-39) for a discussion of Novatian’s theological environment; See Wiles, *Spiritual Gospel*, 112-128 for an overview of the Christological interpretations in the 3rd and 4th centuries.

⁵³ Evans, *Tertullian’s Treatise*, 13.

Isaiah, John, and Matthew,⁵⁴ such as “Let us make men to Our image and likeness,” “The Lord poured down on Sodom and Gomorrah fire and sulphur from the Lord out of heaven,” and “I did not come down from heaven to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”⁵⁵ After bringing out just a few “of the possible passages bearing on this question,”⁵⁶ Novatian concludes,

What could make it more evident that He is not the Father but the Son than the fact that He is set before us as obedient to God the Father? If we were to believe otherwise—that He is the Father—then we would have to say that Christ is subject to another God the Father. [*Trin.* 26.21]⁵⁷

Novatian jeers at the Sabellian inability to acknowledge the personal distinction between the Father and Son, which, he contends, Jesus himself made clear. In Novatian’s presentation, neither the Son’s obedience nor the idea of one person sending another comports with the notion of a single divine person; Scripture repeatedly mentions two subjects when addressing divine activities.

Novatian at times characterizes the Son’s works as an imitation of the Father’s. For this idea, Novatian uses the verb *imitare*, and I will focus on this verb in my discussion of the following quotation. Novatian writes,

He is also the image of God the Father; therefore this truth can be added to the other: As the Father works (*operatur*), so does the Son also; and the Son is the imitator (*imitator*) of all His Father’s works (*operum*). Accordingly, every man can feel that, in a sense, he has already seen the Father, inasmuch as he sees Him who always imitates (*imitatur*) the invisible Father in all His works (*operibus*). [*Trin.* 28.15]⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Many of the scriptural quotations found in this section of *Trin.* 26 can be found as proof texts for the personal distinction of the Word in Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. See Justin *Dial.* 59-66; Irenaeus *Haer.* 4.2.1-3; Tertullian *Prax.* 8-13.

⁵⁵ Gen. 1:26; Gen. 19:24; John 6:38.

⁵⁶ *Trin.* 26.20.

⁵⁷ Quid enim tam evidens potest esse, hunc non Patrem esse, sed Filium, quam quod oboediens Patri Deo proponitur, ne si Pater esse credatur, alteri iam Deo Patri Christus subiectus esse elicatur?

⁵⁸ Nam et imago est Dei Patris, ut his etiam illud accedat, quoniam sicut Pater operatur, ita operatur et Filius, et imitator est Filius omnium operum paternorum, ut perinde habeat unusquisque quasi iam uiderit Patrem, dum eum uidet qui inuisibilem Patrem in omnibus operibus semper imitatur.

Since so much of Novatian's argument comes from John's Gospel, it seems likely that Novatian is offering a paraphrase of John 5:19 ("Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise'")⁵⁹ when it comes to the idea of the Son doing the works of the Father.⁶⁰ Although Novatian quotes this particular passage only once and without including the portion of the verse which uses *imitare*,⁶¹ I agree with DeSimone that this verse likely served as an influence on those passages in which Novatian uses the term *imitare*.⁶²

Barnes proposed that Novatian's novel application of the term *imitare* raises the issue of temporal duration in divine activity: the Father works, the Son sees what the Father does, and then the Son follows suit by performing the same kind of works.⁶³ As such, Novatian's "imitate" language seems to reformulate John 5:19 to reflect his interest in affirming the Son's function as the minister who enacts the Father's will by copying

⁵⁹ Although the idea of the Son "seeing" the Father is another major element of both *Trin.* 28.15 and John 5:19 (as well as Novatian's citation of John 14:7-9 in *Trin.* 28), I do not think the verb *videre* functions any differently from my understanding of how Novatian uses *imitare*. Both terms point directly to the Son manifesting the will of the Father as opposed to meaning that the Son watches the Father do something and then acts similarly. Papandrea reads *Trin.* 28.15 as primarily about the invisibility of the Father and the visibility of the Son. He then connects the invisibility of the Father to the fact that the Father cannot be localized, *Trinitarian Theology*, 77. Fausset notes only that *imitare* comes from a dependence on John 5:19 and points to the use of the term in *Trin.* 22, *Novatiani Romanae*, 102 n.16.

⁶⁰ See also *Prax.* 22 in which Tertullian quotes John 5:19-27 (and other texts) to show the distinction between the Father and Son. In that chapter, Tertullian offers no interpretation of the text, but rather lets the temporally sounding ideas stand in which the Son watches or observes the Father in order to do the same works.

⁶¹ *Trin.* 14.12: "If Christ is only man, how is it that 'what the Father does, the Son also does in like manner,' when man cannot do works like the heavenly works of God?" (Si homo tantummodo Christus, quomodo quae Pater facit, et Filius facit similiter, cum homo caelestibus operibus Dei similia opera facere non possit?)

⁶² *Trin.* 21.3; 22.3; 28.15. DeSimone suggests a possible reference to John 5:19 in his footnotes for each of these passages. *Trin.* 22.3 also plays a significant role in Novatian scholarship because Novatian identifies the Word "in the form of God" with the Word's performing and imitating the Father's works. I will address this passage in the next chapter because I believe Novatian is ultimately making a similar case to that which I am describing above.

⁶³ Barnes, "A Night at the OPERA."

the works seen. However, this interpretation calls into question an indisputable point of his theology: all of creation comes through the Word.⁶⁴ Below, I discuss Novatian's comment in *Trin.* 6.7 that the works of the Father are produced at the same time that He wills them, which I take to mean that the Son produces works as the Father wills them, rather than through imitation. Novatian's comments make sense in light of the Word Christology tradition representing the Word as overtly performing the works which the Father thinks or wills.⁶⁵

Novatian also associates the Son performing/imitating the works of the Father with the terms *virtus* and *potestas*. In almost every case,⁶⁶ *potestas* should be translated as power, which he associates with divine strength, or what M. R. Barnes describes as "the capacity of an existent to affect."⁶⁷ In a few passages Novatian uses *potestas* to mean a spiritual or celestial power (such as in his references to Col. 1:16).⁶⁸ *Virtus*, however, carries a greater range of meanings. It too can be seen as a spiritual or celestial

⁶⁴ See also *Trin.* 8.11: "That is the reason He also 'sits above the Cherubim'; that is, He presides over His various works. The living creatures, which hold dominion over the rest, are subject to His throne, and the crystal from above covers all things."

⁶⁵ Barnes also points to this tradition in his paper, but he sees Novatian as reformulating it into a temporal or multi-step activity. Mattei, however, evaluates *Trin.* 28.15 in light of the idea that the Son is the image of the Father who imitates all His works. His analysis of these themes leads him to the judgment that Novatian treats the demiurgic activities of the Son and the divine status of the Son as indicators of the Son's ontological equality with the Father, "*De Trinitate*," 216-217.

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⁶⁶ *Trin.* 22.4's use of *potestas* may be translated as "authority," while *Trin.* 25.9's use can be understood as "attribute."

⁶⁷ Michel R. Barnes, "One Nature, One Power: Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic," *StPatr* 29 (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 206. An example of this understanding in *Trin.* can be found in 26.20: "For throughout the Divine Scripture of the Old, as well as the New Testament, He is shown to us as born of the Father, one through whom 'all things were made, and without whom nothing was made,' who has ever been obedient to the Father and still obeys. He is also revealed to us as having power (*potesta*) over all things, power, however, that has been given, that has been granted and conferred."

⁶⁸ See *Trin.* 1.13-14; 13.2; 21.9.

power,⁶⁹ but Novatian also frequently employs it to mean attribute or virtue,⁷⁰ power (with a meaning similar to *potestas*),⁷¹ and work/miracle.⁷²

Much of Novatian's focus on power relates to the ability of the Son to perform works associated with divinity, thus enabling Novatian to maintain that the Word is God. For example, Novatian writes,

For they consider in Him the frailties of man, but they do not regard the miracles of a God (*Dei uirtutes*). They reflect on the infirmities of His flesh, but they exclude from their minds the powers of His divinity (*potestates diuinitatis*). If this proof drawn from the infirmities of Christ has such efficacy as to prove that He is man precisely because of those infirmities, then the proof of His divinity, drawn from His miracles (*uirtutibus*), will have enough efficacy to show on account of His might works (*operibus*) that He is also God. If His sufferings manifest human frailty in Him, why should not His works (*opera*) confirm the divine power (*diuinam potestatem*) in Him? If the miracles (*uirtutibus*) do not suffice to prove Him God, then neither will the sufferings alone suffice to prove Him man. [*Trin.* 11.4, slightly altered]⁷³

Following Morhmann's classification of *virtutes* as having the meaning of "miracles," DeSimone translates *virtus* twice as that, but once also as power.⁷⁴ I see no justification for not retaining consistency in this passage; Novatian sets Christ's frail humanity in contrast with the *virtutes* and *operae*, both of which indicate divine works/miracles and which he associates with divine power (*potestas*). The context of *Trin.* 11.4 gives no indication of which works or miracles Novatian has in mind, but it is clear that his

⁶⁹ *Trin.* 1.13; 13.2; 14.6; 29.16.

⁷⁰ *Trin.* 2.8; 2.12; 9.6.

⁷¹ *Trin.* 2.4; 2.11; 3.6; 4.6; 29.12. See my discussion in the next chapter on the connection Novatian makes between *substantia* and *virtus* in 31.1-2.

⁷² *Trin.* 11.4-5; 21.3; 29.10.

⁷³ Quasi hominis enim in illo fragilitates considerant, quasi Dei uirtutes non computant, infirmitates carnis recolunt, potestates diuinitatis excludunt, quando si probatio haec ex infirmitatibus Christi illuc proficit, ut homo ex infirmitatibus comprobetur, probatio diuinitatis in illo collecta ex uirtutibus illuc proficiet, ut etiam Deus ex operibus asseratur. Si enim passiones ostendunt in illo humanam fragilitatem, cur opera non asseratur in illo diuinam potestatem? Ne si hoc non profecerit, ut Deus ex uirtutibus asseratur, nec passiones proficiant, ut etiam homo ab ipsis esse monstretur.

⁷⁴ See DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 40, and Mohrmann, "Les origines de la latinité chrétienne," 170. Papandrea translates *virtus* in this passage as "power" twice and then with "attribute." I am convinced that Novatian is specifically comparing Jesus Christ's human frailty with the scriptural evidence of miracles.

authority for making the case for Christ's divinity comes from Scripture; Novatian would have us to understand all of the miracles of Jesus recorded in the Gospels.⁷⁵ Novatian's point is clear: the Son is called God because his works can come only from God's power, or capacity to affect.⁷⁶

Another passage in *Trin.* makes the association between divinity and works equally clear. Novatian quotes Jesus' words from John 10:35-36 in which Jesus proclaims himself to be the Son of God by pointing to the works which he has manifested. Novatian writes,

With these words He did not deny that He was God; on the contrary he affirmed that He was God... In fact, He said that He was sent, and pointed out to them: "Many works (*multa opera*) have I shown you from My Father." Therefore, He wanted Himself to be considered not the Father but the Son. [*Trin.* 15.12]⁷⁷

In this passage Novatian offers the Son's works during the Incarnation as evidence that he is God.⁷⁸ To combat Sabellian theology, Novatian claims that the Son's distinction from the Father is proved by His ability to enact the miracles/works of the Father. What Novatian does not suggest, however, is that the Son's performance of divine works,

⁷⁵ *Trin.* 11.6: "Just as Scripture proclaims that Christ is also God, so, too, does it proclaim that God is very Man. It describes Jesus Christ as Man, just as it describes Christ the Lord as God..." Although Novatian does not quote Acts 2:22, it may have played a role on Novatian's terminology. The *Vetus Latina*, Cod. 51 for Acts 22:2 reads, "Viri israelitae! Audite haec uerba: ihesum nazarenum uirum sanctum a deo ostensum in uobis uirtutibus ac prodigiis ac signis, quae fecit uos in medio uestrum sicut uos ipsi scitis."

⁷⁶ Mattei also considers the power of the Son to create and recreate as evidence for understanding Christ's divinity in light of John 5:19, "*De Trinitate* 31," 217. See also DeSimone for comments about how the shared demiurgic work of the Father and Son indicates the Son's divinity, *Treatise of Novatian*, 92.

⁷⁷ Quibus uocibus neque se negauit Deum, quinimmo Deum se esse fumauit... Missum enim se esse dixit et *multa opera* se ex Patre ostendisse monstrauit, ex quo non Patrem se, sed Filium esse intellegi uoluit.

⁷⁸ *Trin.* 14.12 also seems to imply this: "If Christ is only man, how is it that "what the Father does the Son also does in like manner," when man cannot do works (*operibus*) like the heavenly works (*caelestibus operibus*) of God?" Although it is possible that Novatian is referring in this case to the creation of the world, it is unlikely. His ultimate point is that no human being can be thought of as being prior to the world and therefore his suggestion that Christ is only a man makes no sense. In this case, he must be arguing against the humanitarian monarchians and demanding how it is that Jesus manifests works attributable only to God, namely miracles.

which leads to the recognition that the Son is God, entails ontological equality between the Father and Son.⁷⁹

The Word as Obedient to the Father: Contrasting Divine Attributes

Novatian writes that the Word “rendered and still renders perfect obedience (*oboedientiam*) to His Father in all things.”⁸⁰ He uses the terms *oboedientia* and *oboedire* to describe the Son’s activities, especially those related to theophanies and the circumstances and consequences of the Incarnation.⁸¹ Novatian speaks about the obedience of the Son in being sent from, or in descending from, the Father. He develops the theme of the Father sending the Son by pointing to the Son’s distinction from the Father and then affirming the Son’s divinity.⁸² In other instances, Novatian uses the terms for obedience to refer to the Son’s general obedience to the Father in all things.⁸³

Novatian relates the Son’s obedience to his relationship to space and place. His philosophical understanding of the Father’s divine nature, which cannot be localized, leads him to explain God’s appearance in creation as pertaining to the Word. Novatian

⁷⁹ DeSimone writes, “Scripture and Tradition had obliged Praxeas and his followers to temper the rigor of their doctrine, when it was a question of deciding just who Jesus Christ was. They now made some sort of distinction between the Father and the Son. However, having recourse to Luke 1.35, they restricted this distinction to the person of Christ Incarnate. They maintained that in the Savior, the Son was the flesh; that is, the humanity of Jesus. The Father was the Spirit; that is, God and Christ,” *Treatise of Novatian*, 113. Wiles notes, “Praxeas apparently based his case on a selection of texts, including especially three assertions of Jesus recorded in St John’s Gospel—‘I and my Father are one’: ‘He that hath seen me hath seen the Father’: ‘I am in the Father and the Father in me.’ The orthodox needed to give an account of these texts which did not involve the assertion of a personal identity of Father and Son,” *Spiritual Gospel*, 118.

⁸⁰ *Trin.* 22.5. See also *Trin.* 22.6.

⁸¹ For comments about the Son’s obedience in distinguishing the Son from the Father while arguing for the Son’s divinity in *Trin.* 22.6, see Mark Weedman, *The Trinitarian Theology of Hilary of Poitiers* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 34-36.

⁸² *Trin.* 11.8 and 27.13. In *Trin.* 22.1 and 22.12 Novatian quotes Phil. 2:8 which states that Christ’s obedience extends to his death on the cross.

⁸³ *Trin.* 22.6 states, “Consequently, this proves that He never regarded His divinity as a means of unlawfully arrogating to Himself equality with God the Father. On the contrary, obedient and subject to His Father’s every command and will, He was even content to take upon Himself the form of a slave—that is, to become man.” See also *Trin.* 22.5, 26.20-1, and 31.15.

thus casts the Son's ability to interact with space and place as distinguishing him from the Father, whose nature makes such interaction impossible. In a summary of these themes, Novatian writes, "In the same manner that He, as Man, ascended into heaven, as God, He first descended from heaven. In the same manner that he, as Man, goes to the Father, so as a Son obedient (*oboediens*) to His Father shall he descend from the Father."⁸⁴ Because the Scriptures refer to God descending and ascending in theophanies,⁸⁵ Novatian highlights the Son's obedience as proof that divine activity is unified. He avoids the idea that the Son's activities are in any way independent of the Father's will, which would result in the suggestion of two divinities.⁸⁶

Although the specific terms for obedience do not always appear in Novatian's descriptions of the Father sending the Son, the Son's descent clearly implies the Son's obedience in being sent. Therefore, I treat the passages referring to the Son being sent as dependant on the idea of the Son's obedience.⁸⁷ For example in *Trin.* 26, Novatian again asserts the "sacred authority of Divine Scripture" in affirming Christ's divinity based upon his being sent from the Father. In making his case for the distinction of the Father from the Son, he quotes numerous passages from the Old and New Testaments, nine of which come from the Gospel of John:⁸⁸

⁸⁴ *Trin.* 11.8: Et quomodo in caelum, qua homo, ascendit, sic inde, qua Deus, ante descendit. Et quomodo ad Patrem, qua homo, uadit, sic oboediens Patri, qua Filius, in de descensurus est. De Simone lists the Scriptural allusions in this passage: Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, Acts 1:9, John 6:38, John 6:63, John 14:3, John 14:28, and Acts 1:11.

⁸⁵ See Joseph Barbel's assessment that the Son's appearance as an angel in the theophanies proves the Son's divinity. Barbel presumes the Son's inferior divinity as compared with the Father, *Christos Angelos*. Theophaneia, Vol. 3 (Bonn: Hanstein, 1941), 82-85.

⁸⁶ *Trin.* 31.6-8; 13.

⁸⁷ See also, for example, *Trin.* 26.8 in which Novatian quotes John 6:38 to prove that God the Son has appeared on earth to do the will of God the Father who sent him.

⁸⁸ Gen. 1:26; Gen. 1:27; Gen. 19:24; Ps. 2:7-8; Ps. 109 (110):1; Isa. 45:1; John 6:38; John 14:28; John 20:17; John 8:17-18; John 12:28; Matt. 16:16; Matt. 16:17; John 17:5; John 11:42; John 17:3-4; Matt 11:27/Luke 10:22; Ps. 109 (110):1/Mark 16:19/Heb. 1:3.

For who does not acknowledge that the Second Person after the Father is the Son, when he reads [that]...the same Christ says: “Father, I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people who stand round, I spoke, that they may believe that you sent (*misisti*) Me”? Or when Christ Himself makes a pronouncement on the Rule [of Truth] and says: “Now this is everlasting life, that they may know You, the one true God, and Him whom You have sent (*misisti*), Jesus Christ. I have glorified You on earth; I have accomplished the work that You have given Me”?⁸⁹

In the passages following this one, Novatian claims that all things come through the Word, that the Son obeys and has always obeyed the Father, and that the Father grants (*concedere*) and gives (*indulgere*) his power (*potestas*) to the Son over all things.⁹⁰ Above all else, Novatian presents his “sent” theology (based on his repeated usage of the term *mittere*) as proclaiming the distinction between the Father and the Son.

In chapter 4, I described how Novatian defined the Father’s divinity by making divine localization an impossible proposition. In his logic concerning the Son’s personal distinction from the Father, Novatian closely follows the Word Christology tradition which identifies the Word as the personal presence of God in the theophanies and in the Incarnation. In chapter 4, I also quoted the first portion of *Trin.* 17.7 in order to discuss the Father’s relationship to space. I now quote the passage in its entirety to demonstrate the contrast Novatian makes between the Father and Son concerning place:

Finally, what would you reply if I should say that the same Moses everywhere represents God the Father as boundless (*immensum*), without end (*fine*)? He cannot be confined by space (*loco*), for He includes all space (*locum*). He is not in one place (*loco*), but rather all place (*locus*) is in Him. He contains (*continentem*) all things and embraces (*complexum*) all things; therefore He cannot descend (*descendat*) or ascend (*ascendat*) inasmuch as He contains (*continet*) all things and fills (*implet*) all things. Yet Moses represents God as

⁸⁹ *Trin.* 26.2; 26.16-17: nolunt enim illum secundam esse personam post Patrem, sed ipsum Patrem...ab eodem dicitur: *Pater, sciebam quia semper me audis, uerum propter circumstantes dixi, ut credant quia tu me misisti?* Aut cum definitio regulae ab ipso Christo collocatur et dicitur: *Haec est autem uita aeterna, ut sciant te unum et uerum Deum et quem misisti Iesum Christum. Ego te honorificaui super terram, opus perfeci quod dedisti mihi?* The two Scripture passages Novatian quotes are John 11:42 and 17:3-4.

⁹⁰ *Trin.* 26.20-1.

descending to the tower which the sons of men were building, seeking to inspect it and saying: “Come, let us go down quickly, and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.” Who do the heretics think was the God that descended to the tower in this passage, and then sought to visit these men? Was He God the Father? In that case, God is enclosed (*clauditur*) in a place (*loco*); how then does He embrace (*complectitur*) all things? [*Trin.* 17.7]⁹¹

The logic of the passage begins with the hypothetical: imagine if Moses was actually speaking about the Father concerning the theophany of the tower of Babel. He then works through the topological theology which governs one aspect of his theology of the Father. Next, he presses his opponents to accept the impossibility of the Father having such contact with the world; the Father’s nature as defined by Novatian’s use of *immensus* makes such contact incomprehensible.⁹² His reasoning therefore shifts to the application of Word Christology topics discussed above, which include his emphasis on the Son’s subjectivity in the theophanies.⁹³

Some scholars look to one passage in particular to determine whether Novatian bifurcates or blends his topological theology concerning the Father and his comments on the Son’s ability to be present in a place. In *Trin.* 14.7, Novatian writes, “If Christ is only man, how is He present wherever He is invoked—since it is not Man’s nature but God’s

⁹¹ Quid si idem Moyses ubique introducit Deum Patrem immensum atque sine fine, non qui loco cludatur, sed qui omnem locum cludat, nec eum qui in loco sit, sed potius in quo omnis locus sit, omnia continentem et cuncta complexum, ut merito nec descendat nec ascendat, quoniam ipse omnia et continet et implet, et tamen nihilominus introducit Deum descendentem ad turrem quam aedificabant filii hominum, considerare quaerentem et dicentem: *Venite et mox descendamus et confundamus illic ipsorum linguas, ut non audiat unusquisque uocem proximi sui?* Quem uolunt hic Deum descendisse ad turrem illam et homines tunc illos uisitare quaerentem? Deum Patrem? Ergo iam loco clauditur. Et quomodo omnia ipse complectitur? Novatian uses *implere* in this passage, and his meaning clearly stands in line with the ideas that God both contains and pervades all things. This is not the same usage which Novatian has in mind in *Trin.* 17.9 when he states, “Accordingly, the only remaining conclusion is that He descended of whom the apostle Paul says: ‘He who descended, He it is who ascended also above all the heavens, that He might fill (*impleret*) all things,’ that is the Son of God, the Word of God.” As in *Trin.* 9.2, 10.1, and 23.8, Novatian seems to be referring to the fulfillment of prophecy or the mystery of God’s will in *Trin.* 17.9.

⁹² Keilbach makes a similar argument, “Divinitas Filii,” 208.

⁹³ Justin makes a similar argument in *Dial.* 127.

to be able to be present everywhere”⁹⁴ DeSimone takes a guarded approach to this passage: “This omnipresence or ubiquity is included in the dogma of God’s immensity as a part is included in the whole.”⁹⁵ He approvingly quotes an assessment by Keilbach, who describes Novatian’s theology as a kind of mitigated subordination.⁹⁶ Keilbach notes that Novatian “adjudicates such things of one or other Person which hardly leaves that equality intact.”⁹⁷ DeSimone ultimately hedges his interpretation of an ontological subordination of the Son to the Father by citing other statements in *Trin.* which point to equality.⁹⁸

Unfortunately, DeSimone does not explain with any detail how the Son’s ability to be present everywhere relates to the philosophical categories of topological theology which Novatian embraces. Papandrea, however, seems to view DeSimone’s conclusion as too tentative. He interprets Novatian’s reference of the Son’s ability to be *omni loco* as a terminological equivalent to the Father’s nature as *immensus*.⁹⁹ Neither Papandrea’s equating of *immensus* to the phrase *omni loco*, nor DeSimone’s tentative approach stand up to scrutiny. Novatian rejects any association between the Father’s divine nature and any language of place (*loco*) in accordance with his topological theology.¹⁰⁰ Papandrea’s

⁹⁴ Si homo tantummodo Christus, quomodo adest ubique inuocatus, cum haec hominis natura non sit, sed Dei, ut adesse omni loco possit? Novatian’s reference is to Matt. 18:20.

⁹⁵ DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 94. Fausset also makes a similar claim about the Son when he writes, “[Novatian] attributes to the Son of God the ‘natura dei’ in the way of omnipresence, and the ‘uirtus dei’ and ‘uis diuinitatis,’ *Novatiani Romanae*, xlvii.

⁹⁶ Keilbach, “Divinitas Filii,” 208.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 206, quoted in DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 94.

⁹⁸ Specifically, DeSimone points out the unity of substance between Father and Son, *Treatise of Novatian*, 100.

⁹⁹ Papandrea argues that the Son, according to Novatian, is omnipresent in his pre-Incarnational and post-ascension states, and he then suggests, “While the Father is invisible and omnipresent (*immensus*), the Son is the visible image of the Father, and is localized in space and time by virtue of the incarnation,” *Trinitarian Theology*, 326.

¹⁰⁰ Keilbach makes a similar point in “Divinitas Filii,” 207-8. Cf. Papandrea, who attempts to answer for the distinction stating, “But the heart of the issue is the assumed underlying distinction, that the

suggestion of terminological equivalence entirely overlooks the meaning of Novatian's terms as they relate to his theology of the transcendent Father and his theology of the Son. DeSimone's suggestion of part-to-a-whole logic is vague enough to provide little depth to the analysis.¹⁰¹ In fact, Novatian's affirmation about the Son's ability to be everywhere, as proof of his divinity, offers a distinct contrast with the Father's nature as *immensus*. Novatian makes no reconciliation between the difference in attributes he claims for the Son and those he claims for the Father.

Furthermore, scholars have overlooked the probable influence of Tertullian on this question as well as the general understanding of the significant role and powers of spiritual beings.¹⁰² In his *Apology* 22, Tertullian outlines the vast powers of angels and demons, adding,

Every spirit (*spiritus*) is [as though it were] winged. Both angels and demons have this property. Therefore, they are everywhere (*ubique*) in a moment. For them, the whole world is but a single place (*locus unus*); what happens and where it happened they can know and tell with the same ease. Their swiftness is considered divine (*divinitas*) because their nature (*substantia*) is not understood. [*Apol.* 22.8, altered slightly]¹⁰³

I think it is useful to compare Tertullian's comment with Novatian's in *Trin.* 14.7: "Si homo tantummodo Christus, quomodo adest ubique inuocatus, cum haec hominis natura non sit, sed Dei, ut adesse omni loco possit?" The terminology between the two is similar and Tertullian attributes a form of omnipresence to angels. Furthermore, "God"

Father is *never* visible or localized, while the Son can be, though He is not always so," *Trinitarian Theology*, 326.

¹⁰¹ Such an analysis can be cross applied to what I describe in the next section as Novatian's linguistic arguments or relative comparisons. Suggesting that Novatian intends *omni loco* to fit into the concept of the Father as *immensus* tells us nothing about how such attributes of divine persons can be related.

¹⁰² For a brief survey of these topics in patristic texts, see Jean Daniélou, *The Angels and Their Missions*, Trans. David Heimann (Notre Dame, Ind.: Christian Classics, 1987).

¹⁰³ Omnis spiritus ales est: hoc angeli et daemones. Igitur momento ubique sunt. Totus orbis illis locus unus est; quid ubi geratur tam facile sciunt quam adnuntiant. Velocitas divinitas creditur, quia substantia ignoratur.

in Novatian's passage does not refer to the Father. When we bring to mind the fact that Novatian calls both the Son and Father "God" on the basis, at times, of a distinction between the different relationships they have to place, then this passage in *Trin.* 14.7 appears to highlight the Son's interaction with place and not the Father's. Novatian makes this distinction clear in his accounting of the Son's obedience to be sent from heaven.¹⁰⁴ Attempts to view Novatian's theology of the Son's relationship to place as equivalent to that of the Father's must be read as false efforts to harmonize an issue which is ultimately destructive to Novatian's thought. Throughout *Trin.*, the nature of the Son's divinity enables him to act and function in a manner impossible for the Father's nature.

Finally, Novatian ties together the themes mentioned so far in this section when he discusses John 10:30's statement, "I and the Father are one."¹⁰⁵ In *Trin.* 27, he uses the topics of the Son's obedience and sending as a way of articulating the personal distinction of the Father and Son.¹⁰⁶ In order to reach his specific teachings about the distinction of the the Father and Son, Novatian first establishes what it means for the Father and Son to be *unum*. Novatian writes that John 10:30's use of the neuter form of "one" (*unum*) indicates that the Father and Son are "one through harmony (*concordiam*),

¹⁰⁴ Mattei treats the spatial language related to the Son's coming out of the Father and being with the Father as a distraction from the greater context of *Trin.* 31, which he believes is a full endorsement by Novatian of divine essential equality, in "De Trinitate 31," 193. He believes that Novatian attempts, unsuccessfully, to eliminate or modify the impact of spatial understanding from his concept of divinity. I agree with Mattei, to a certain extent in his treatment of the Father, however I am unconvinced that such logic applies to Novatian's theology of the Son.

¹⁰⁵ Ego Pater unum sumus. See my section "The supreme God is one" in chapter 4, for a discussion of John 10:30 and a citation of the parallel passage in Tertullian's *Prax.* 22.

¹⁰⁶ On this point see Pelland, "Une passage difficile," 43; Loi, "La Latinità Cristiana," 283-284; Papandrea, *Trinitarian Theology*, 331-332.

through love (*amorem*), and through affection (*dilectionem*).¹⁰⁷ To explain this unity, Novatian offers 1 Cor. 3:6-8 as an analogy; Apollos and Paul are held up as two persons yet also “one (*unum*), with regard to the harmony existing between them.”¹⁰⁸ “In fact,” Novatian continues, “when two persons are of one mind, one truth, one faith, of one and the same religion, one also in the fear of God, the two are really one, even though they are two (*duo*).”¹⁰⁹ Thus far in his explanation, Novatian explains that John 10:30 establishes a unity based on love and a desire for the same things.¹¹⁰

Again, what we find is Novatian introducing the topic of the Son’s obedience to suggest the distinction between the Father and Son. According to later passages in this chapter, Novatian develops the theme that the Father and Son’s conformity of will is manifested in the Son’s obedience to being sent: “[Christ] says that He has been sent, so that the Lord Christ, coming as He did through obedience, might prove, having been sent, that He was not the Father but the Son, who certainly would have been the sender if He

¹⁰⁷ *Trin.* 27.4. In *Trin.* 27.3 Novatian explains, “Furthermore, since He said ‘one’ [*unum*], let the heretics realize that He did not say ‘one’ [*unus*]. For ‘one’ in the neuter gender denotes harmony of fellowship, not unity of person. He is said to be ‘one’ [*unum*], and not ‘one’ [*unus*], because there is no reference to number but to association of fellowship with another.”

¹⁰⁸ *Trin.* 27.7.

¹⁰⁹ *Trin.* 27.8, modified slightly: *Nam quando duorum una sententia est, neritas nna est, fides una est, una atque eadem religio est, unus etiam Dei timor est, unum sunt, etiamsi duo sint.*

¹¹⁰ Fausset, for example, speaks about a moral unity being at the center of Novatian’s teaching concerning the Father and Son, *Novatiani Romanae*, xlvii. Pollard uses Fausset to claim the same moral unity and suggests Novatian is open to the charge of ditheism since he takes Novatian’s understanding of *substantiae communion* in *Trin.* 31.20 as different from Tertullian’s *unitas substantiae* or *una substantia*, in *Johannine Christology*, 74. Simonetti agrees with the emphasis on a moral unity between the Father and Son and also believes that Novatian rejects Tertullian’s teaching of divinity based upon a shared substance. Simonetti writes, “But Novatian rejects this concept [Tertullian’s idea of shared divine substance] in the name of a less materialist view of the divinity; consequently he also rejects the idea of a single substance in his explanation of how the Father and the Son can constitute one God. He speaks of a dynamic union of *concordia* and *caritas* and, above all, he takes, as foundation of the union, the clear subordination of the Son to the Father,” “Beginnings of Theological Reflections,” 217. I am arguing that Novatian does indeed make the shared substance of the Father and Son a critical rationale for identifying the Son as “God,” even though I also believe that Novatian does not consider the Son to share the Father’s supreme nature and attributes. Furthermore, I think that Pollard makes an unintentional mistake of blending the categories of God’s oneness with the assertion that Novatian had an interest in speaking of the Father and Son as “constituting one God.” Novatian surely wants to avoid the charge of ditheism, but he also does not attempt to articulate his theology with anything like this statement by Pollard.

had been the Father.”¹¹¹ Divine unity in *Trin.* 27 cannot be summed up entirely by a simple teaching regarding the Son’s obedience to the Father. The conformity of wills between the Father and Son is based on a love, which contains no conflict. Novatian connects these themes together in order to demonstrate that such love occurs between the distinct persons of the Father and Son. Previously, Novatian has argued at length that the Father cannot be sent, since this violates his topological theology. Novatian ultimately uses his teaching of John 10:30 to develop his understanding that only the Son can be sent, since any particular manifestation of the Father violates the logic of his theology.

The Word’s Obedience Makes Him Minister of the Father’s Will

Before assigning the Word the definitive role in demiurgic activity, Novatian attacks any connection between the Father as Creator with any form of anthropomorphism.¹¹² He writes

He does not have members, nor are the functions of members necessary to Him at whose will alone (*solum arbitrium*), even though it be unexpressed (*tacitum*), all things serve and are present. Why should He, who is light, have need of eyes? Why should He, who is everywhere, seek to procure feet? Why would He want to walk, when He can go nowhere outside Himself? Why should he desire hands, whose silent Will (*silens uoluntas*) is the artificer of all things to be created? Nor does He, who knows even our secret wishes, have need of ears. Why should He need a tongue, whose very thought (*cogitare*) is a command (*iussisse*)? [*Trin.* 6.6]¹¹³

¹¹¹ *Trin.* 27.13. Keilbach looks at this chapter and finds that Novatian overemphasizes the Son’s obedience to the Father which leads to a sense of subordinationism, “Divinitas Filii,” 214-215. Justin makes a similar case in *Dial.* 56: “‘Then,’ I said, ‘let us return to the Scriptures and I shall try to convince you that He who is said to have appeared to Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, and is called God, is distinct from God, the Creator; distinct, that is, in number, but not in mind. For I state that He never did or said anything else than what the Creator—above whom there is no other God—desired that He do or say.’”

¹¹² This includes the two hands language seen in both Theophilus and Irenaeus discussed in chapter 5.

¹¹³ Neque enim sunt ei aut membra aut membrorum officia necessaria, ad cuius solum etiam tacitum arbitrium et seruiunt et adsunt omnia. Cur enim requirat oculos, qui lux est? Aut cur quaerat pedes, qui ubique est? Aut cur ingredi uelit, cum non sit quo extra se progredi possit? Aut cur manus expetat, cuius ad omnia instituenda artifex est et silens uoluntas? Nec auribus eget, qui etiam tacitas nouit uoluntates. Aut propter quam causam linguam quaerat, cui cogitare iussisse est?

Novatian speaks of the Father's "unexpressed will" (*tacitum arbitrium*), "silent will" (*silens uoluntas*), and "thought" (*cogitare*) as synonymous. The terminology Novatian chooses shows a clear literary parallel with that found in Tertullian's *Prax.* When describing the Father's creative activity, Tertullian claims that God silently planned (*tacite cogitando*) the world in the company of Reason (*ratio*).¹¹⁴ Above all else, Novatian follows one of the major elements found in the Word tradition; he connects the Father's creative activities with the activity of the divine Mind and the bringing forth of the Word.

Novatian explains that the objects of the Father's demiurgic will are created simultaneously with the thought to create them. In *Trin.* 6.7, he writes, "[Body parts] are not necessary to God, whose works (*opera*) not only immediately follow His Will (*uoluntatem*) without any effort, but even proceed simultaneously (*cum*) with His Will (*uoluntate*)."¹¹⁵ To strengthen his attack on any anthropomorphic portrait of the Father physically carrying out His works, Novatian argues that the Father's will/command/thought to create produces the works themselves. *Noet.* 10.3 contains a similar idea, connecting the topics of the Father's will to create, the immediate production of the work, and the role of the Word: "When he willed, in the way he willed, at times he had fixed, he showed forth his Word, through whom he made all things. Just as when he wills, he makes, so when he puts his mind to it, his work is done."¹¹⁶

Although Novatian does not include a reference to the Word in *Trin.* 6.6-7, I have already

¹¹⁴ *Prax.* 5: "For although God had not yet uttered his Discourse (*sermonem*), he always had it within himself along with and in his Reason (*ratione*), while he silently thought out (*tacite cogitando*) and ordained with himself the things which he was shortly to say by the agency of Discourse (*sermonem*)."

¹¹⁵ Deo autem non necessaria, cuius uoluntatem non tantum sine aliqua molitione opera subsequuntur, sed ipsa statim opera cum uoluntate procedunt.

¹¹⁶ ὅτε ἠθέλησεν, καθὼς ἠθέλησεν, ἔδειξεν τὸν Λόγον αὐτοῦ καιροῖς ὠρισμένοις παρ' αὐτῷ· δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐποίησεν. ὅτε μὲν θέλει, ποιεῖ· ὅτε δὲ ἐνθυμεῖται, τελεῖ.

outlined his teaching that all things come through the Word. Therefore, *Noet.* and *Trin.* share a common teaching about the simultaneity of the Father's will and the Word's activity, which may be the clearest evidence of Novatian's literary dependence on *Noet.*¹¹⁷

Novatian connects the Son's divinity with his role in creation when he identifies the Son as the "minister" (*minister*) of the Father, a designation which can be found in other expressions of Word Christology.¹¹⁸ Novatian writes,

The Son does nothing of His own will (*arbitrio*) or counsel and He does not come from Himself. He obeys (*oboedit*) all His Father's commands and precepts; hence although his birth proves that He is the Son, His docile obedience (*oboedientia*) proclaims Him to be the minister (*ministerium*) of the will of the Father (*paternae uoluntatis*) from whom He is. While He renders Himself obedient (*obtemperatem*) to the Father in all things, even though He is also God, yet by His obedience (*oboedientia*) He shows that the Father, from whom He also drew His origin, is the one God. [*Trin.* 31.15]¹¹⁹

I believe that in this passage Novatian has in mind all the activities of the Son, including the activity of the world's creation. Although Novatian juxtaposes the Son as God with the Son as minister, his description of the Son as minister depends on the idea of obedience. In the last section, I demonstrated that Novatian used the Son's obedience as a way of categorizing the Son as God. I also earlier demonstrated that demiurgic activity, including the Son's manifestation of the Father's will to create, likewise became a

¹¹⁷ As noted in the Introduction, the numerous parallel themes found between *Prax.* and *Noet.* make it difficult to determine whether Novatian knew *Noet.* A shared idea, such as the simultaneous event of the Father's will with the production of His works, makes it more probable that Novatian knew both works since nothing of this doctrine appears in *Prax.*

¹¹⁸ Although Justin is writing in Greek, a similar idea can be found in Justin's discussion of the Old Testament theophanies. In *Dial.* 126, he concludes, "From these passage it has been conclusively proved that He who appeared to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the other Patriarchs was appointed by the Father and Lord, and administers to His will, and is called God." See also *Dial.* 58 and 127.

¹¹⁹ Filius autem nihil ex arbitrio suo gerit nec ex consilio suo facit nec a se uenit, sed imperiis paternis omnibus et praeceptis oboedit, ut quamuis probet illum natiuitas Filium, tamen morigera oboedientia asserat illum paternae uoluntatis ex quo est minister. Ita dum se Patri in omnibus obtemperantem reddit, quamuis sit et Deus, unum tamen Deum Patrem de oboedientia sua ostendit, ex quo et originem traxit.

justification for Novatian to call the Son “God.” In the passage above, Novatian draws these topics together to demonstrate that the Son’s classification as God arises from the fact that the Son perfectly obeys the Father and is thus the Father’s minister.

Tertullian’s use of *minister* illustrates the connection between the Son as the minister of the Father and the Son as divine in a similar way to Novatian’s statement. In *Herm.* 22, Tertullian states:

And so in the beginning God made the heaven and the earth. I worship the fullness of the Scripture by means of which He reveals to me both the Maker and the things made; but in the Gospel I find in addition Him who is both the Minister (*ministerium*) and the Intermediary (*arbitrum*)¹²⁰ of the Maker—the Word. [*Herm.* 22.3 modified slightly].¹²¹

In both *Trin.* and *Herm.*, the Son’s role as the minister of the Father’s will entails the demiurgic function of the Word as a subject distinct from the Father. For both authors, demiurgic activity presumes the classification of divinity, regardless of whether Tertullian and Novatian understood the divine hierarchy differently.

It is true that Sabellian theology rejected the Word’s subjectivity. Heine, for example, summarizes the major difference between the Word Christology tradition and the Sabellian theology concerning the Word: Sabellians denounced the idea of a personal/subjective Word, based on a Stoic interpretation of Logos language in Scripture.¹²² For the Sabellians, the Word was the command of the Father rather than a subject distinguishable from the Father. Heine portrays the Word Christology tradition’s

¹²⁰ Holmes translates this “Witness” in the ANF. Such a translation suggests a greater scope to the Father’s direct activity, which I do not think Tertullian intended. Waszink’s choice of “intermediary” glosses the role of the Word as entirely enacting the creative will of the Father.

¹²¹ Igitur in principio deus fecit caelum et terram. Adoro scripturae plenitudinem qua mihi et factorem manifestat et facta. In euangelio uero amplius et ministerium atque arbitrum factoris inuenio sermonem.

¹²² See Heine’s, “Christology of Callistus,” 67. Cf. Evans who writes, “The Deity is a monad, a singular individual unity, which possesses internal powers of expansion, appearing in the act of creation as the Father, in redemption as the Son, and in grace and inspiration as the Holy Spirit, the Three being not three realities but three aspect of one reality,” *Tertullian’s Treatise*, 13.

advocacy of the subjectivity of the Word against the Sabellian understanding of the term as something of a philosophical proxy war of Middle Platonic and Stoic ideas, respectively. The Word Christology tradition looked similar to the Middle Platonic ideas about the Supreme God and the Demiurge. In regard to Novatian and Tertullian's formulations of subjectivity, theirs are not reactionary positions against a theological opponent, but rather expressions of a stable element in the Word Christology tradition.

The ideas discussed in the sections above, all pertain to the assertion that the Son's activities stand in harmony with the Father's will to create. Even the Son's existence prior to the world is notable for the fact that the Son comes out of the Father in order to enact the Father's demiurgic will. That the Son is the minister of the Father's will must be read in light of the fact that the Son gains this designation by serving as the instrument of creation, which in and of itself is grounds for calling the Son "God" in Novatian's estimation.

Compared to Angels and Men, The Son Is Uniquely God

The final example I address of Novatian's justification for calling the Son "God" concerns the manner by which he compares the relative merit of identifying the Son and other beings as divine. Novatian begins his argument based on the fact that the Scriptures call the Son "God." He compares this appellation given to the Son with instances in which the Bible calls angels and humans "gods." Novatian's explicit logic regarding the Son's designation in this case centers almost entirely on the assertion of greater propriety for the Son to be called "God." As noted in the introduction to this chapter, Novatian thought of all the justifications for calling the Son "God" as interrelated. Therefore, the

discussion below will concern Novatian's direct statements for justifying the naming of the Son as God as compared with other beings. We can safely assume, however, that Novatian also understood the other justifications for calling the Son "God" as inherently supporting this particular argument.¹²³

Novatian argues simultaneously that the Son is rightfully called "God" and that this does not interfere with the assertion that there is one God.¹²⁴ In *Trin.* 30.5, Novatian describes "heretics who maintain that Christ is only a man." He repeats the syllogism which they use against his theology: "If the Father is one and the Son another and if the Father is God and Christ is God, then there is not one God, but there are two gods introduced in like manner: the Father and the Son."¹²⁵ Novatian responds to the charge by pointing out that the Scriptures affirm that "there is only one Lord," that Christ is called "the one Master," and that only God is said to be good.¹²⁶ He then notes that the Bible calls Christ "Lord," Paul a "master," and Christ "good," concluding,

They do not think that the truth, that there is one Lord, is prejudiced in any way but that other truth, that Christ is also Lord. Nor do we think that the truth, that there is one Master, is prejudiced in any way by the truth, that Paul is also a master. Finally, neither do they assert that the truth, that there is one who is good, is prejudiced in any way by the truth, that Christ is also called good. Let them acknowledge, then, by the same line of reasoning that the truth, that there is one

¹²³ As I have noted above, *Trin.* 26.20 is a good example in which Novatian combines several of the arguments found in this chapter.

¹²⁴ DeSimone offers the following distinction, "Novatian considered (as did St. Paul and the other Ante-Nicene writers) the divine nature as the primary possession of the Father who communicates it to the Son. The Father alone is ὁ Θεός, while the Son is Θεός without the article," *Treatise of Novatian*, 92. Of course Novatian's Latin could not make this distinction, but I essentially agree with DeSimone that Novatian does intend to make a distinction between how the Father's divinity is spoken of as compared with the Son's.

¹²⁵ *Trin.* 30.5, altered slightly: si alter Pater, alter est Filius, Pater autem Deus et Christus Deus, non ergo unus Deus, sed duo dii introducuntur pariter, Pater et Filius. Hippolytus, the author of *Noet.* and Tertullian also countered the charge of ditheism. See again *Ref.* 9.7, *Noet.* 11.1 and *Prax.* 3. In *Trin.* 30.21, Novatian states, "First of all, then, we must refute the argument of those who presume to make against us the charge of saying that there are two gods." (Et in primis illud retorquendum in istos qui duorum nobis deorum controversiam facere praesumunt.)

¹²⁶ He refers to Deut. 6:4 and Eph. 4:5 for the first identification, Matt. 23:8 for the second, and Matt. 19:17; Mark 10:18; and Luke 18:19 for the third. See *Trin.* 30.22-25.

God, is not prejudiced in any way by the other truth, that Christ also is declared to be God. [*Trin.* 30.25]¹²⁷

In this passage, Novatian merely demands that his theological opponents be consistent in their response to the categories which the Bible ascribes to Christ. He does not attempt to say whether his opponents should treat the term “God” exactly the same way in regard to the Father and Son.¹²⁸ Therefore, Novatian’s argument is not one based on the assertion of divine ontological equality between Father and Son.

Twice in *Trin.* Novatian uses Psalm 82:6, in which God calls men and/or angels “gods,” to explain why the Son rightfully is called “God.” His first citation of this passage comes in the context of Jesus himself quoting it. In *Trin.* 15.10, Novatian recalls Jesus’ words in John 10:30. There Christ affirms that he is one with the Father. Novatian describes how the suggestion enraged the Jews, and he incorporates John 10:35-36 into his explanation of what the Father and Son being one means,

(Jesus) vigorously refuted His adversaries with the precedent and testimony of the Scriptures. “If [the Law] called them gods,” (Ps. 82:6) He says, “to whom the words of God were addressed—and the Scripture cannot be broken—do you say to Me whom the Father has made holy and sent into this world. ‘You blaspheme,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?” [*Trin.* 15.11]¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Ac si non putant aliqua ratione officii posse ei quod unus Dominus est per illud quod est Dominus et Christus neque ei quod unus est magister per illud quod est magister et Paulus aut illi quod unus est bonus per illud quod bonus sit nuncupatus et Christus, eadem ratione intellegant officii non posse ab illo quod unus est Deus ei quod Deus pronuntiatus est et Christus.

¹²⁸ Similarly, he does not bother to suggest whether the identification of God and Paul as “master” means the same thing.

¹²⁹ Exemplo et testimonio scripturarum aduersarios suos fortiter refutauit. *Si illos, inquit, dixit deos, ad quos uerba facta sunt, et non potest solui scriptura: quem Pater sanctificauit et misit in hunc mundum uos dicitis quia blasphemias, quia dixi: Filius Dei sum ego?* Novatian is quoting from John 10:35-36, which states, “Jesus answered, ‘Is it not written in your law, “I said: You are gods”? It is those to whom God’s word came who are called gods—and scripture cannot be set aside. Then why do you charge me with blasphemy for saying, ‘I am God’s son,’ I whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world.”

Novatian cites this text in order to demonstrate that Jesus himself makes a claim about relative merit: since others have been called “gods,” in Scripture no less, the title Son of God should not be so alarming.

Novatian next clarifies the implications of calling the Son “God” while recognizing the Son’s distinction from the Father. “If, beyond any question of a doubt,” Novatian continues, “[men] are said to be gods to whom the words of God were addressed, much more is He God who is found to be better than all of them.”¹³⁰ This is the first point in his argument and it builds off of Jesus’ statement. Novatian suggests a gradation of proper usage: if men can be called gods, then this title belongs even more justly to the Word. We recall that all of Novatian’s justifications for calling the Son “God” stand in the background for making this claim even though those arguments discussed above lacked a clear ontological component. His second point concerns the distinction of the Son from the Father: “And yet He (Jesus) refuted their slanderous blasphemy in a fitting manner by a proper ordering; for He wants Himself to be considered God and considered precisely as the Son of God, not the Father Himself.”¹³¹ In this case, Novatian does not speak about the nature of divinity but merely the Son’s special deservedness of the title “God.”¹³²

¹³⁰ *Trin.* 15.12: Nam quia sine dubitatione dei esse dicuntur ad quos uerba facta sunt, multo magis hic Deus qui melior illis omnibus inuenitur.

¹³¹ *Trin.* 15.12: Et nihilominus calumniosam blasphemiam dispositione legitima congruenter refutauit. Deum enim se sic intellegi uult, ut Filium Dei et non ipsum Patrem uellet intellegi.

¹³² Novatian’s logic closely follows that of Tertullian in *Prax.* 13, in which he also quotes Ps. 82 to make the same point as Novatian: “But if you are of those who on one occasion did not tolerate our Lord when he showed himself to be the Son of God, for fear of having to believe that he is the Lord, recollect, along with them that it is written, ‘I said, Ye are gods and sons of the Most High; and, God standeth in the congregation of the gods’: so that, if scripture has not been afraid to pronounce to be gods those men who by faith have been made sons of God, you may know that much more has it by right applied the name of God and Lord to the true and only Son of God.”

Novatian does not propose a hard and fast line between the existence of divine beings and created beings. Rather, Novatian simply asserts the relative appropriateness for speaking about the Father, Son, angels, and men as gods. The title God belongs fully to the Father. The Son is likewise to be called God, yet in a way which does not suggest that he is the Father. The fact that the Scriptures refer to men and angels as “gods” means that Novatian is obliged to find an explanation for this suggestion. Although he does not make mention of the Platonic levels of divinity, it is useful to remember the Platonic distinction between Being and Becoming and perhaps regard this distinction as a parallel idea to Novatian’s. The Supreme God, in both cases, possesses an unquantifiable abundance of existence or attributes and chooses to share them. In Novatian’s theology, the unique generation and activity of the Son make him incomparable to the angels and men, and yet, the Son is presented as unequal to the Father. Below, I will discuss in what ways human beings share in divinity according to Novatian.

The second use Novatian makes of Ps. 82 illustrates the manner by which he distinguishes the eminence of the Father, Son, angels, and human beings. Previously, I demonstrated that Novatian held temporal existence to be indicative of preeminence, rank, power, and, therefore an indication of who is subject to whom. Just as the Father is subject to no one, the Son is subject only to the Father. For this reason, Novatian again takes Ps. 82’s reference to “gods” (this time understood as angels) to call the Son “God” based on the concept of subjection. He states,

For if an angel, who is subject to Christ, is declared to be a god, much more and more fittingly will Christ, to whom all angels are subject, be said to be God. In fact, it is not in accord with natural propriety to deny to the greater what has been granted to the lesser. So if an angel who is less than Christ, is, nevertheless,

called a god, it follows quite readily that Christ, who is both greater and better than not just one angel but all of them, is to be called God. [*Trin.* 20.3]¹³³

Novatian sets the Son apart from the angels in relative deservedness of the title “God.”¹³⁴

He does not define the connection between the Father’s divinity and the Son’s divinity in order to distance the Son from the angels who are called “gods.” Rather, a seemingly Platonic-like scale of relative sharing in the Father’s nature appears to be the extent of Novatian’s analysis. This statement neither denies nor downplays the uniqueness of the Son’s relationship to the Father or special deservedness of the title “God” which Novatian seeks to justify.

Novatian’s argument closely parallels some of what Tertullian says in *Prax.* However, Tertullian also chooses to argue from the idea of the Son’s ontological connection to the Father, when he addresses the topic of calling the Son “God” in light of passages such as Ps. 82:6. This is a line of reasoning which Novatian avoids, at least in the context of the discussion related to Ps. 82. Tertullian states that God’s unity is based on the idea that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share “one undivided substance.”¹³⁵ He adds this element to his argument for the greater propriety of calling the Son “God” rather than the angels:

[I] shall follow the apostle, with the result that if the Father and the Son are to be mentioned together, I call the Father "God" and name Jesus Christ “the Lord”. But Christ by himself I shall be able to call God, as does the same apostle

¹³³ Si enim qui subiectus Christo angelus deus promitur, multo magis et constantius Christus, cui sunt omnes angeli subiecti, Deus esse dicetur. Nec enim naturae congruit ut quae minoribus concessa sunt maioribus denegentur. Ita si angelus Christo minor est, angelus autem deus dicitur, magis consequenter Christus Deus esse dicitur, qui non uno, sed omnibus angelis et maior et melior inuenitur.

¹³⁴ The Son’s ministry of the Father’s will also shapes Novatian’s presentation of the Son as the Great Angel, meaning messenger or herald, as we find in *Trin.* 18.9. In light of examples of an angel appearing as a divine figure, Novatian argues that it cannot be the Father who is called and angel “lest he be subject to another,” (*Trin.* 18.8), nor could it be the Father in violation of His attributes, such as invisibility (*Trin.* 18.13). The Son’s subjection to the Father as His angel describes the Word’s obedience to the Father’s will. This obedience distinguishes the Son from the Father.

¹³⁵ *Prax.* 13: unius et indivisae substantiae.

<when> he says, *Of whom is Christ, who is God over all, blessed for evermore.* For also the sun's beam, when by itself, I shall call "the sun": but when naming the sun, whose the beam is, I shall not immediately call the beam "the sun". For though I make two suns, yet the sun and its beam I shall count as two objects, and two manifestations of one undivided substance, in the same sense as <I count> God and his Word, the Father and the Son. [*Prax.* 13]¹³⁶

Tertullian makes an ontological connection between the Father and Son, and he adds an ontological dimension of the Son's preeminence over the angels which is not found in Novatian's argument. Tertullian, therefore, distinguishes between the divine ontology (of the Father and the Son) with the ontology of created beings.¹³⁷

Novatian concludes *Trin.* 20, in which he makes his comments about the angels being subject to the Son, by also comparing the difference between naming Moses "god" and Christ "God." He states, "in the former case the name [God] is given with a qualification in the latter unreservedly...in the former case, for a time; in the latter, without reference to time."¹³⁸ Elsewhere he declares that the Son shares in God's substance (which I discuss in the next chapter), but he does not offer this line of thought in the course of his linguistic argument, as Tertullian had done before him.

In fact, Justin's analysis of Ps. 82 looks the most similar to the position I have identified in Novatian's explanation. Justin argues for the Son's divinity, or identification with the title "God," on the basis of God sharing his attributes with the Son,

¹³⁶ Sed apostolum sequar ut si pariter nominandi fuerint pater et filius deum patrem appellem et Iesum Christum dominum nominem. solum autem Christum potero deum dicere, sicut idem apostolus: Ex quibus Christus, qui est, inquit, deus super omnia, benedictus in aevum omne. nam et radium solis seorsum solem vocabo: solem autem nominans cuius est radius, non statim et radium solem appellabo. nam etsi soles duos faciam, tamen et solem et radium eius tam duas res et duas species unius et indivisae substantiae numerabo quam deum et sermonem eius, quam patrem et filium.

¹³⁷ Barnes points to Tertullian's *Prax.* 2 and notes: "Tertullian, for example, uses 'power' (often *potestatis*, but also *virtus*) in doctrinal formulations in which the sense is 'one power, one substance'. This understanding and use of the term appears particularly in *Prax.*, when Tertullian, having insisted upon the distinctness of the Divine Persons, draws back to affirm their substantial unity: the three are 'one substance, and one condition, and of one power...'," in "One Nature, One Power," 210.

¹³⁸ *Trin.* 20.8.

angels, and human beings. Justin quotes the entire Psalm to prove that Scripture identifies human beings as “gods,” because they were created to share immortal life. He concludes, “It has been shown that they were considered worthy to become gods, and to have the capability of becoming sons of the Most High, yet each is to be judged and convicted, as Adam and Eve.”¹³⁹ Justin’s comment relates to the subject of deification. He argues that the title “God” applies strictly to the Father, but it also applies to the Son and to those beings who share in, or will share in, divine attributes such as immortality. Such was a position also shared by Irenaeus.¹⁴⁰ These authors share with Novatian a similar logic when they refrain from demarcating the divine natures of the Father and Son from created beings such as angels and human beings.

Furthermore, Justin’s thinking is not an anomaly in the Word tradition known to Novatian. Hippolytus’ *Ref.* provides evidence that the understanding of deification relates not only to the special rank of the Word, but also to God’s creative potential:

For if He had willed to make thee a god, He could have done so. Thou hast the example of the Logos. His will, however, was, that you should be a man, *and* He has made thee a man. But if thou art desirous of also becoming a god, obey Him that has created thee, and resist not now, in order that, being found faithful in that which is small, you may be enabled to have entrusted to you also that which is great. [*Ref.* 10.29]¹⁴¹

Like Justin and Irenaeus (and Novatian later), Hippolytus avoids drawing a line between divinity and creation in favor of speaking about creatures sharing in the Supreme God’s

¹³⁹ *Dial.* 124: καὶ οὕτως ἀποδέδεικται ὅτι θεοὶ κατηξίωνται γενέσθαι, καὶ υἱοὶ ὑψίστου πάντες δύνασθαι γενέσθαι κατηξίωνται, καὶ παρ’ ἑαυτοῦς καὶ κρίνεσθαι καὶ καταδικάζεσθαι μέλλουσιν, ὡς καὶ Ἀδὰμ καὶ Εὔα.

¹⁴⁰ See Irenaeus’ *Haer.* 4.38.4: “For we cast blame upon Him, because we have not been made gods from the beginning, but at first merely men, then at length gods.” In that passage, he also cites Ps. 82. See also *Haer.* 4.11.2 and 5.pref.

¹⁴¹ I discuss this passage above in chapter 5. Cf. Justin *Dial.* 127, “...but [they saw] Him who, according to God’s will, is God the Son, and His Angel because He served the Father’s will.”

divine attributes. This participation entails the understandable categorization of human beings as “gods.”

Novatian speaks in other passages about humanity’s salvation as a sharing in divinity in a way reminiscent of Justin, Irenaeus, and Hippolytus.¹⁴² This sharing in divinity is exactly what I mean above when I mention deification in Justin’s theology, and it is also related to Hippolytus’ comments about the capacity of created beings to become gods. For example, Novatian writes, “[Christ] says: ‘Whoever keeps my word will never see death.’ Hence the word of Christ bestows immortality and through immortality bestows divinity (*diuinitatem*).”¹⁴³ Although Novatian steers clear of Hippolytus’ suggestion that the Father could have made gods like He made the Logos, Novatian clearly accepts the language of deification. In this way, Novatian offers a justification for associating angels, men, and the Son with divinity: the Son, who is above all mankind and the angels, rightfully deserves to be called God, while the angels and men do in a lesser sense.¹⁴⁴

In one instance, Novatian even comes close to Hippolytus’ and Justin’s suggestion that God decided to make a God out of the Word when he states, “Therefore He is God, but begotten (*genitus*) precisely that He might be God. He is also Lord, but for this very reason was He born of the Father, that He might be Lord.”¹⁴⁵ Although

¹⁴² Although I will avoid any lengthy discussion about eschatology and the ideas suggestive of man’s deification in *Trin.*, Novatian’s treatment of these topics include other parallels, such as an eschatological vision, which are also developed by some of these authors,.

¹⁴³ *Trin.* 15.7: Sed qui uerbum custodierit, inquit, meum, mortem non uidebit in aeternum. Ergo uerbum Christi praestat immortalitatem et per immortalitatem praestat diuinitatem.

¹⁴⁴ In the next chapter I will look to the terms *aeternus* and *aeternitas* as they relate to the Son. Although I ultimately disagree with some of Mattei’s conclusions, he too recognizes that Novatian’s usage of these terms for the Father, Son, Spirit and saints has an analogical dimension pointing to a usage dependent on the idea of participation.

¹⁴⁵ *Trin.* 31.17: Est ergo Deus, sed in hoc ipsum genitus, ut esset Deus. Est et Dominus, sed in hoc ipsum natus ex Patre, ut esset Dominus.

Novatian treats the Son's claim to the categorization of "God" as unique, his theology does not function by making a hard and fast line between the divine life (of the Father and the Son) and creation, as was the case in Tertullian's theology.¹⁴⁶ It is the Father's divinity which Novatian identifies as singular. In that light, he speaks in various ways about how the Father's attributes are manifested uniquely in the second person, the Word. However, other beings (angels and humans) are called "gods" in several scriptural passages. Novatian does not develop a sophisticated rationale as to why human beings and angels can be called "gods." The closest he gets to an explanation involves the idea that God shares immortality which entails a sharing of His divinity. As I note above, this position contains several important parallels with the Platonic understanding of Being and Becoming.

Conclusion

DeSimone makes the curious suggestion that, in the places where Novatian relies on Word Christology traditions, we should not presume a teaching based on the Son's ontological subordinationism.¹⁴⁷ In fact, we have seen that Novatian's use of the Word Christology traditions conforms with his previous presentation of the transcendent Father. In the case of his explanation of Ps. 82, for example, Novatian drew from both Tertullian

¹⁴⁶ A good comparison for my point can be seen in a typical approach to explaining Arianism. The method for describing the central point of Arian theology usually involves the idea that Arius drew an ontological line between the God who always was and creatures who came into being. By making this separation between the eternal divine and the created, Arius placed the Son on the side of the creation since he denies the eternality of the Son. The very act of making a hard and fast line is, I think, foreign to Novatian's thinking. Cf. Harnack who views the subject of deification during Novatian's time as pervasively different: "The hope of deification is the expression of the idea that this world and human nature do not correspond to that exalted world which man has built up within his own mind and which he may reasonably demand to be realized, because it is only in it that he can come to himself," *History of Dogma* (2), 317.

¹⁴⁷ DeSimone writes, "The note of subordinationism in Novatian, however, is not found so much in his exegesis of the theophanies (chs. 17, 18, 19, 20)—where he follows the safe and sure tradition of previous Ante-Nicene writers," *Treatise of Novatian*, 108.

and Justin. The content of his analysis favored the Word Christology of Justin over Tertullian in that Novatian justified calling the Son “God” in relation to the Son’s preeminence over angels and human beings. He did not follow Tertullian’s argument which also included a teaching distinguishing the divine ontology of the Father and the Son from all creatures. DeSimone’s proposal reveals a clear methodological problem. In Novatian’s choice of arguments for identifying the Son as God, I have shown that Novatian neither argues from nor presupposes the idea of ontological equality between the Son with the Father. This is the case even when theological precedents were known or available to him.

Novatian’s explanation of the Son’s divinity, in light of the Son’s contact with time and the world, follow from his commitments to philosophical theology. The transcendent Father cannot execute the role of the God who appears in theophanies and ultimately becomes incarnate. However, knowledge of the Son’s existence and the evidence Novatian presents for calling the Son “God” comes from the witness and fulfillment of revelation associated with Scripture. The Scriptures identify the Son as God and Novatian interprets the Son as bringing meaning to the topic of divine immanence. He does this because the Scriptures identify the Son as the Word, as existing before the world, as the agent of creation, and as ministering to and enacting the Father’s will.

Novatian’s dependence on the Word Christologies of his predecessors reveals that he does not treat his sources as necessarily articulating an ever advancing clarification of doctrine. In fact, we have seen evidence that Novatian departs from Tertullian in favor of earlier expressions of Word Christology. This very important fact is largely missing from

scholarship on Novatian. Novatian utilizes arguments and statements from earlier theologians only when they conform to his overarching theology. That theology, I have shown, consists of the transcendence of the Father and the ability of the Son to act as the immanent divine presence. Not only have Novatian's arguments not evidenced a reliance on positing ontological equality of the Son and Father, but I have also demonstrated that some of his arguments require a distinction in the Son's divine nature as compared with the nature of the Supreme Father.

Chapter Seven: The Son as Ontologically Subordinate

Introduction

As discussed in chapter 6, Novatian identifies the Son as God while also declaring that the Father is the one and Supreme God. All scholars agree that Novatian teaches a divine hierarchy or subordination related to the pre-eminence of the Father over the Son. However, scholars continue to debate whether this hierarchy of the Father over the Son also constitutes diminished attributes in the Son, which is another way of speaking about ontological subordination.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that Novatian teaches the Son's ontological subordination to the Father against those scholars who believe that Novatian holds to the ontological equality of the Father and the Son. I also will discuss Novatian's insistence that the Son and Father share an ontological connection, in relation to his teaching of the Son's ontological subordination. The Father shares His divine substance with the Son, which makes the Son divine. This unique sharing in substance constitutes an ontological connection between the Father and Son. At the same time, Novatian denies that the Son's divine attributes equal those of the Father, which means that the Son is ontologically subordinate to the Father.

In conjunction with chapter 6's finding that Novatian argues for the Son's classification as God apart from the notion of ontological equality with the Father, my discussion will bring to light the fact that his teaching of the Son's ontological

subordination supports his theology of the transcendent Father.¹ First, I will analyze Novatian's language of the Son's generation or birth. Second, I will look at Novatian's use of the Two-stage Logos theory. Third, I will examine the kind of association Novatian makes between the Son and eternity. Fourth, I will describe the importance of temporal terminology related to the Son's begetting. Fifth, I will show that Novatian teaches that the Son shares the substance of the Father, only in a qualified way. Finally, I will point to Novatian's explicit insistence on the inequality of the Son and the Father. I will show how all of these topics work in Novatian's theology as distinguishing the supreme nature of the Father from the lesser nature of the Son. To be clear, I am affirming that Novatian teaches an ontological connection between the Father and the Son, since the Father shares His substance with the Son. This sharing makes the Son divine because the Father is divine. However, the Son's divinity (his nature or essence) also must be described as inferior to the Father's divinity.

Three major trends in scholarship have offered the following interpretations of Novatian's understanding of the Son's divinity: 1) the Son is ontologically subordinate to the Father,² 2) Novatian taught a form of mitigated subordinationism,³ or 3) the Son is ontologically equal with the Father.⁴ As I mention in the Introduction to this study, my concern is not with engaging authors in the first group. Although I share many of their conclusions, my approach to reading *Trin.* differs significantly enough that I will argue from the framework which my previous six chapters have established.

¹ In order to make my case, I will look at six topics which are interconnected throughout *Trin.* These topics are treated by scholars as critical data for ascertaining Novatian's understanding of the Son's nature.

² Scholars in this group include Tixeront, Amann, Prat, Peterson, Loi, Pollard, and Simonetti.

³ The primary scholars in this group are D'Alès, Kielbach, and Desimone. Again, I previously included Fausset in this group because he believes that Novatian understands a unity but fails to articulate a coherent doctrine.

⁴ Mattei and Papandrea have articulated this position in the past few decades.

I will interact more with the second group. This group includes Keilbach, who coined the phrase “mitigated subordinationism” to help rebut some of the views expressed by those reading Novatian as teaching only the Son’s ontological subordination.⁵ DeSimone follows much of Keilbach’s interpretation, and acknowledges the presence of some inequalities of the Son’s divinity. At the same time, DeSimone points to Novatian’s doctrine of the Son’s shared substance with the Father as suggesting ontological equality. He sees the combination of these factors in Novatian’s theology as evidence that early Christians, and not just Novatian, struggled towards a theology which identifies the Father and the Son as equally divine, albeit with some conceptual and terminological failure.⁶ I will be arguing that a false sense of ontological equality has been fostered by this understanding of substance in the second and third groups of scholars.

Generation of the Word

P. Mattei offers a strong case for reading the variety of terms which Novatian uses to speak about the Son’s generation and birth synonymously.⁷ His work challenges the

⁵ Keilbach, “Divinitas Filii,” 208.

⁶ DeSimone writes, “The manner of expression of the Ante-Nicene writers sounds truly strange to ears accustomed to the precision of Nicaea. Accordingly, unless one places the language of these writers in its proper setting and time, place, etc., and studies carefully their purpose in writing, as well as their adversaries, he will surely misinterpret their doctrine. Furthermore, one or two seemingly ill-sounding statements are to be diligently compared with the author’s complete thought and are not to be imprudently wrenched from their context,” *Treatise of Novatian*, 98. DeSimone’s concern is one of orthodoxy. He wants to rescue Novatian from the charge of heresy and does so by assuming that Novatian wished to stand within the orthodox tradition. To him, Novatian produced an orthodox work with problematic issues of phrasing suggestive of certain heresies. Dunn rightfully chastens DeSimone’s methodological presuppositions and anachronisms, “Diversity and Unity,” 387-390.

⁷ Mattei writes, “Des passages rassemblés il ressort nettement que 4 des 5 verbes sont, dans la perspective ‘trinitaire’ ici retenue, équivalents, interchangeables: Novatien n’hésite pas à remplacer *procedere* et *nasci* par *proferri* (respectivement 15, 6; 31, 2) ou doubler *nasci* par *procedere* (15, 10) et *gigni* par *proferri* (22, 4). Pur effet de *uariatio* ou simple gout pour la *copia dicendi*,” “*De Trinitate* 31,” 180.

conclusions of D'Alès and P. G. Aeby. D'Alès identified *generare* with the Son's begetting before time and *nasci* with the Incarnation.⁸ Aeby added two additional terms to d'Alès' categories; he argued that Novatian employs both *generare* and *gigni* to refer to the generation of the Word from the Father and *nasci* as well as *procedere* to refer to the Incarnation.⁹ Mattei, however, believes that Novatian avoids making the terminology about the Word's generation or birth technical.¹⁰ Mattei contrasts Novatian's approach to Tertullian's, which refers to the birth of the humanity of Christ by the terms *nasci* and *natus*.¹¹ I agree with Mattei to the extent that I think Novatian treats all terms for birth and generation as fundamentally related and essentially interchangeable.¹² According to my reading of *Trin.*, this point is critical since Novatian will use all instances of talking about the Son's birth and beginning to contrast his nature with the Father's.

Novatian uses two key concepts to discuss the Son's birth or generation from the Father. First, he takes the Son's generation from the Father as evidence that the divine nature or substance is passed from the Father to the Son. There is an ontological connection or relationship between the Father and Son because the Father shares His

⁸ D'Alès, *Novatien*, 123-124.

⁹ P. Gervais Aeby, *Les Missions Divines: de Saint Justin à Origène* (Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1958), 108. Aeby adds, "Et ici, dans ce contexte de procession, Novatian dira que le Verbe n'est pas proféré en vain mais en vue de la création. Chez lui, *gignere* et *procedere* ne sont pas synonymes. *Procedere* comporte un lien au temps, à la création, que n'a pas *gignere* qui se rapporte à la génération éternelle," Idem.

¹⁰ Cf. DeSimone who distinguishes generation as *ab aeterno* and the Word's birth at time when the Father wills it, *Treatise of Novatian*, 172-173.

¹¹ Mattei, "De Trinitate 31," 181. Additionally, Novatian connects procession (*prolatæ*) with birth (*natus*) in *Trin.* 31.2 and *prolatus* with *generare* in *Trin.* 22.4: "However, He received this from His own Father, that He might be both God and Lord of all and God according to the form of God the Father, begotten (*genitus*) and brought forth (*prolatus*) from Him." In Tertullian's theology, the Word does not become "Son" until later the Incarnation, however he defends the appropriate use of the term *prolatio* despite the Gnostic incorporation of it into their theology. See *Prax* 8 for his defense of retaining the term. Novatian likewise inherently denies the Gnostics a theological ground for using this term by connecting the Father's will with the procession of the Word/Son in birth. Gnostics used the verb *προβολή* in their understanding that one aeon broke away from the Depth on its own, leading to the establishment of a hierarchy of aeons. See Irenaeus *Haer.* 1.preface.3 for a lengthy account.

¹² I disagree with Mattei in that he does not associate terms related to the Son's birth and generation as contributing to a distinction in divine attributes between the Son and the Father.

substance with the Son. Second, Novatian attributes the personal distinction of the Son from the Father as necessitated by the fact that the Father cannot be born while the Son must have a beginning. In Novatian's theology, the fact that the Son has any sort of beginning or birth stands in complete opposition to Novatian's description of the Father.¹³ The Son's beginning and birth contradict the categories Novatian sees as necessary for defining the Supreme God's ontology, such as *aeternus* and *immensus*.

In *Trin.* 31.12-14, Novatian develops both concepts mentioned above. "As a matter of fact," Novatian states, "whatever (*quicquid*) He [the Word] is, He is not of Himself because He is not unborn (*innatus*), but is of the Father (*ex Patre*) because He is begotten (*genitus est*)."¹⁴ Novatian gives no indication that *innatus* or *generare* refer to separate concepts in this passage, as d'Alès and Aeby suggested. Both terms point to the fact that the Son receives his existence from the Father, and this makes the Son unlike the unborn Father. This contrast points to Novatian's understanding of the Son's ontological subordination. In addition, Novatian's use of *quicquid*, in light of the phrase *ex Patre*, refers to the idea that the Word's nature and substance derive from the Father. By connecting the Son's divine standing with his generation and birth in this passage, Novatian expresses the Son's ontological connection to the Father despite the fact that concepts such as birth and beginning cannot be applied to the nature of the Father.

Novatian continues this section of *Trin.* 31 by identifying the second person after the Father as Word, Son, and Christ, and also by accepting other theological categories, such as power and wisdom to refer to the Son. This use of categories sets Novatian in

¹³ Cf. Loi who argues that Novatian's theology distinguishes itself from the prior Word Christology tradition in by separating the Son's demiurgic role entirely from his generation, *La Trinità*, 299.

¹⁴ *Trin.* 31.12: Nunc autem quicquid est non ex se est, quia nec innatus est, sed ex Patre est, quia genitus est.

line with other Word Christologies.¹⁵ These traditions allow him to speak about the Son's ontological connection to the Father with an array of concepts.¹⁶ Novatian writes, "For whether He is the Word (*uerbum*), whether He is Power (*uirtus*), whether He is Wisdom (*sapientia*), whether He is Light (*lux*), whether He is the Son (*Filius*)—whatever (*quicquid*) He is of these, He is not from any other, but from the Father, as we have already mentioned above."¹⁷ Novatian's logic can be summarized by the following: whichever theological tradition is used to speak about the Father and the second person, it must be based on an ontological connection between the two.¹⁸ According to Novatian, whether the second person after the Father is called Word, Power, Wisdom, Light, or Son, this person derives his substance and nature from the Father, which is indicated by his use of *quicquid* in the the quotation above.

Novatian concludes this section of *Trin.* 31 by combining the biblical traditions about the Word's generation with the philosophical and theological categories separating the Father from birth or a beginning. He writes:

Owing His origin (*originem*) to the Father, He could not cause any disunion (*discordiam*) in the godhead (*diuinatis*) by making two gods (*numero duorum*)

¹⁵ Loi emphasizes the biblical origin of these categories, *La Trinità*, 300.

¹⁶ See, for example, the section on Hippolytus in chapter 5 and especially my discussion of *Noet*. See also below in the section "Novatian's use of *semper* and *tempus*" for a citation of Barnes' discussion of Tertullian's identification of the Son as the Power of God. One example of Tertullian blending some these traditions can be found in *Prax.* 6 where he calls the Word the Wisdom.

¹⁷ *Trin.* 31.12-13, modified slightly: Siue dum uerbum est, siue dum uirtus est, siue dum sapientia est, siue dum lux est, siue dum Filius est. Et quicquid horum est, dum non aliunde est quam, sicut diximus iam superius, ex Patre.

¹⁸ Novatian's position shows some harmony with the metaphors used by his predecessors of the sun and the beam of light, the fire from fire, and the water source and the river. The closest Novatian gets to using any of these metaphors is *Trin.* 18.4-5: "Great things are dangerous if they happen suddenly. Even the light of the sun, striking suddenly with excessive brilliance upon eyes accustomed to the darkness, will not manifest the light of day but rather will cause blindness... In like manner Christ, the image of God and the very Son of God, was presented to the eyes of men only insofar as He was able to be seen." (*Periculosa sunt enim quae magna sunt, si repentina sunt. Nam etiam lux solis subita post tenebras splendore nimio insuetis oculis non ostendet diem, sed potius faciet caecitatem... Sic ergo et Christus, id est imago Dei et Filius Dei, ab hominibus inspicitur, qua poterat uideri.*) Norris discusses Alcinous' use of the tradition which describes the Supreme God as a blinding light, and he traces the idea back to Plato, *God and World*, 35-36.

deorum), inasmuch as He drew His origin (*originem*), in being born (*nascendo*), of Him (*ex illo*) who is the one God (*unus Deus*). In this respect, since He is the Only-begotten (*unigenitus*) and the First-born (*primogenitus*) of [the Father] who—because He has no origin (*originem*)—is alone (*unus*) the beginning (*principium*) and head (*caput*) of all things, [the Word] declared accordingly that God is one (*unum*). And [the Word] proved that [the Father] is not subject to any beginning (*principio*) or origin (*initio*), but rather that [the Father] is the origin (*initium*) and the beginning (*principium*) of all things. [*Trin.* 31.13-14, slightly modified]¹⁹

Novatian affirms the ontological connection between the Father and Son based on the Son's origin from the Father. In light of his remarks in *Trin.* 31.12, he treats the Son's generation from the Father as consisting in the Son's reception of the Father's substance.

Furthermore, *Trin.* 31.13-14 ties the personal distinction of the Word as the only-begotten (John 1:14) and as the first begotten (Col. 1:14) to the concept of the Word's beginning.²⁰ When calling the Father the origin or source of the Word, Novatian confirms the distinction between the two by advocating a distinction in divine attributes. The concept of divine birth negates the Son's equality with the Father. As I argued in chapter 4, Novatian attributes the terms *aeternus* and *immensus/infinitus* only to the Father's divine nature. The Son's beginning and origin from the Father make the technical application of these terms to the Son impossible and otherwise incomprehensible.²¹ Therefore, Novatian affirms the ontological relationship by maintaining that the Son comes out of the Father, yet denies ontological equality by

¹⁹ Patri suo originem suam debens discordiam diuinitatis de numero duorum deorum facere non potuit, qui ex illo qui est unus Deus originem nascendo contraxit. Quo genere dum et unigenitus est et primogenitus ex illo est, qui originem non habet, unus est omnium rerum et principium et caput. Idcirco unum Deum asseruit, quem non sub ullo principio aut initio, sed initium potius et principium rerum omnium comprobavit.

²⁰ See also *Trin.* 21.4 for Novatian's interpretation of Col. 1:15's use of *primogenitus* and 13.1 for a citation of John 1:14, with its use of the term *unigenitus*.

²¹ In chapter 4, I discuss the range of meanings which terms, such as *aeternus*, possess in *Trin.* In his application of *aeternus* to the Father, Novatian identifies the impossibility that the Supreme God's nature can be described by having any contact with a beginning or a birth. Novatian's emphasis on the Son's beginning as a way to speak about the Word's personal distinction from the Father must mean that the Son does not possess eternity as the Father does.

maintaining the Son's beginning and birth. His teaching finds its basis in the categories of ontological terminology used by his philosophical and Christian sources.

Stages of the Word

Novatian follows the Two-stage Logos model by identifying the Word's progressive move from in (*in*)²² the Father to the Word's eventual birth out of (*ex*) and then position with (*cum*)²³ the Father. In the Word Christologies I presented in chapter 5, I pointed to the distinction between Two-stage theories of the Logos (Justin, Theophilus, Hippolytus, *Noet.*, and Tertullian) and Irenaeus' Single-stage theory. A fundamental difference between these two theories concerns their respective clarity regarding the timeframe of the Word's personal distinction. It is unclear whether or not Tertullian's Two-stage theory suggests the Word's distinct personality prior to being generated, but his insistence that the Word only becomes a Son at a point in time makes an argument for the Son's eternal distinction difficult to prove.²⁴ *Noet.*'s Two-stage theory, however, offers the explicit argument that the Word was originally a sound.²⁵ Only in Irenaeus' Single-stage theory do we see a logic suggesting the Word's eternal distinction.

²² *Trin.* 31.3 and 4: "Since He is begotten of the Father, he is always in (*in*) the Father..."

²³ *Trin.* 31. 4: "...and He who was in (*in*) the Father, because He was of the Father, was afterwards with (*cum*) the Father..." Novatian also uses *apud* in several places.

²⁴ Mattei presents some of the recent scholarship on this topic highlighting the probability that Tertullian's logic suggests the eternal subjectivity of the Word, "*De Trinitate* 31," 183-184.

²⁵ Novatian rejects this teaching in *Trin.* 31.2: "The Word is to be understood here not as a sound that strikes the air nor the tone of the voice forced from the lungs..." See DeSimone who points out that Praxeas "utterly rejected the concept of the *Word*" as it was described by Word Christologies in favor of speaking about a mere voice, *Treatise of Novatian*, 74 (italics his).

In *Trin.* 31, Novatian offers a Two-stage Logos theory similar to those described in chapter 5. First, he names the Word as the Son²⁶ and then affirms that the Word was always (*semper*) in (*in*) the Father.²⁷ He also emphasizes the Father's will in choosing to bring forth the Word.²⁸ Finally, Novatian connects the Word to the creation of all things.²⁹ When Novatian affirms that the Word is always Son, he departs from the tradition seen in Tertullian's works and *Noet.* which treat the Word as becoming Son at some point after being begotten.³⁰ Because of this distinction, some scholars have interpreted Novatian's claim that the Father has always been Father to indicate the Son's personal distinction from the Father aside from the issue of the Word's exteriorization.

V. Loi argues that Novatian implies the eternal generation of the Son in these passages from *Trin.* 31 cited above, because Novatian claims that the Word/Son was always in the Father.³¹ However, Loi also believes that Novatian's case is weakened by the influence of Stoic ideas in his theology, specifically the concepts of *logos endiathetos*

²⁶ *Trin.* 31.2. Below, in the section "Novatian's use of *semper* and *tempus*," I discuss the fact that Novatian rejects Tertullian's understanding of God becoming Father. Tertullian held that the Father only became the Father when the Word was begotten as Son.

²⁷ *Trin.* 31.3.

²⁸ *Trin.* 31.4. For discussions of the centrality of the Father's will in bringing forth the Son, see Papandrea, *Trinitarian Theology*, 339-342; DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 174; Quarry, "Novatiani De Trinitate liber: it's probable history," *Hermathena* 10 (1899), 66-67; and Mattei, "De Trinitate 31," 182-5. Mattei also takes note of *Prax.* 6.3, Hippolytus' *Ref.* 10.32.1, and *Noet.* 10 as Novatian's literary sources which acknowledge the primacy of the Father's will in bringing forth the Word.

²⁹ *Trin.* 31.4-5. Fausset writes, "A careful study of that chapter [*Trin.* 31] will reveal a certain distinction between the views of Novatian and Tertullian. Novatian does without doubt find the purpose of the Son's generation in the creation of the Universe," *Novatiani Romanae*, xxxvii.

³⁰ As seen in chapter 5, the single subjectivity of speaking about the Son, Christ, and Word interchangeably was well established in the tradition which Novatian received, especially in Justin. However, this identification was not clearly made in regard to the begetting of the Son and was, in fact, explicitly denied by a few of the authors. Justin was not one of them. DeSimone contrasts Origen and Novatian, stating, "Origen thought that he could safeguard the eternal generation of the Son by upholding the eternity of creation. Novatian had the merit of not identifying Sonship with the prolation of the Word for the purpose of creation," *Treatise of Novatian*, 173.

³¹ Loi, *La Trinità*, 27-8.

and *logos prophorikos*.³² G. Pelland likewise points to the Stoic influence on Novatian and highlights Novatian's identification of the Father as eternal and the Son as "before time."³³ He suggests that for Novatian, the Son always exists "in," and then "with" the Father, and he concludes that Novatian does not reach the notion of eternal generation.³⁴ Loi and Pelland both believe that the influence of Stoic language theory must mean that Novatian holds to the idea of the Word's impersonality while in the Father (i.e. when the Word is simply the *logos endiathetos*). They understand Novatian as following the Word Christologies of Theophilus, the author of *Noet.*, and Tertullian.

Although I agree with Pelland's conclusion that Novatian does not speak about the Word's personalization while in the Father, I do not share the certainty that Novatian alludes to or depends on Stoic terminology (in this case *logos endiathetos*) to depersonalize the Word while in the Father. It even appears that Novatian may counter Stoic thinking it in at least one place.³⁵ We should look instead to Novatian's reliance on a few Scriptural verses to explore the subject of the Word's "vocalization" or

³² Papandrea argues that "within the one God, Novatian distinguishes between persons by maintaining that there are stages of existence in the divine life of the Λόγος," over against the implied immutability of the Father, *Trinitarian Theology*, 336. DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 173, Simonetti, "Alcune osservazioni", 778, and Papandrea, *Trinitarian Theology*, 341 explore the importance which Stoic language may have had on Novatian. However, it is important to keep in mind the extent of speculation involved since Novatian does not use this language himself. See chapter 5 above for my comments on the influence of this language.

³³ Pelland, "Une Passage difficile," 28-31.

³⁴ Pelland states, "Bref, Novatien ne parvient pas à la notion de génération éternelle, même s'il voit bien que le Père et le Fils coexistent toujours," Ibid. 31. Mattei correctly points out that the difference between Loi and Pelland rests in the fact that Loi thinks Novatian does not make the Son's generation dependent upon creative activity, whereas Pelland emphasizes the Father's will to generate the Son in conjunction with creative activity, "*De Trinitate* 31," 182.

³⁵ *Trin.* 31.2. For the specific argument that Word Christology, as influenced by Middle Platonism, implicitly counters numerous aspects of Stoically influenced monarchian theology, see Heine, "Christology of Callistus," 61. Heine also suggests that Sabellians had no interest in articulating theology with Logos language. Cf. Simonetti who writes about Callistus' theological project: "The concept—a new one in the controversy—on which the formula was based was that of spirit (*pneuma*): a spirit which, in the Stoic manner, is entirely one with the Logos, pervades the universe, and is identical with God in all God's manifestations, whether as Father or as Son. This Spirit descended and was incarnated in the Virgin," "The Beginnings of Theological Reflection," 215.

externalization out of the Father. In *Trin.* 17.2-3, he quotes portions of Psalm 44:2, noting that God's demiurgic commands are fulfilled by the instrumentality of the Word. He states, "And as He was the Word of God ('My heart has uttered a good word'), he shows that the Word was in the beginning, that this Word was with the Father, and that the Word was God, all things were made through Him."³⁶ We recall from chapter 5 the common understanding in the Word Christology tradition of the Son's generation for the purpose of creation. Novatian also cites Ps. 44:2 in conjunction with verses from John and Revelation, which speak of the Word as God and emphasize the distinction between the Word and the Father in light of demiurgic activity.³⁷ Novatian may have thought of the Word as not personally distinct while in the Father, but the source of his conclusion can not be positively associated with Stoic doctrine or terminology.

DeSimone judges that Novatian did conceive of an eternal, personal distinction, but he leaves some ambiguity in his analysis. While he states that "the Son exists *ab aeterno* in the Father and is eternally generated,"³⁸ he also quotes with approval J. H. Newman who writes, "Novatian, then, might hold that the Father was Father from eternity, because there lay hid within Him One who had the nature of a Son (both as being the Word and as being the Son at length); yet might hold also that the actual

³⁶ *Trin.* 17.3: Ac si hic uerbum Dei est—nam *eructauit cor meum uerbum bonum*—, ostendit in principio uerbum fuisse et uerbum hoc apud Patrem fuisse, Deum praeterea uerbum fuisse, omnia per ipsum facta esse. See also the references to *prolatio* in the previous section.

³⁷ See *Trin.* 13.1 and 15.6. The former cites John 1:14 and Rev. 19:13, the latter John 1:1.

³⁸ DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 173. See also DeSimone's comments on Novatian's inclusion of Col. 1:15 in *Trin.* 21.4. There he takes "firstborn" to mean "eternal." DeSimone writes, "In the mind of the Fathers of the Church, the expression 'firstborn of every creature' can only signify 'born before every creature.' It is used in the metaphorical sense of pre-existence before creation; it implies a relationship to God which cannot be predicated even of angels or men, much less of other creatures. Christ, then, being eternal, has absolute supremacy over all nature creation," *Ibid.*, 85.

genesis or *nativitas* was temporal.”³⁹ DeSimone adds, “Only ‘*quando Pater voluit, processit ex Patre*: when the Father willed, did He proceed from the Father,’ becoming effectively a divine person.”⁴⁰ Papandrea understands DeSimone as rejecting the separate divine personhood of the Word because of this comment. For his part, Papandrea argues that because Novatian connects the Son/Word to the idea of his always being in the Father, Novatian must logically presume the Word’s eternal generation.⁴¹ For Papandrea, and to a degree DeSimone, Novatian’s Two-stage Logos theory speaks only to the Son’s movement (whatever that might actually be) from inside to outside of God, and not to a personalization associated with this movement/generation.

Papandrea and others who argue that Novatian teaches the Son’s eternal distinction share the same shortcoming in their assessment; they fail to account for the fact that the primary passage used to argue for the Son’s eternal generation neither uses the term *aeternus* nor speaks directly of Sonship. This passage is *Trin.* 31.3: “Now, He who is before all time must be said to have been always in the Father; for no time can be attributed to Him who is before time. He is always in the Father, lest the Father be not always the Father.”⁴² Some scholars claim that the passage necessitates the eternality of the Word because Novatian describes the Fatherhood of God as “always.” Therefore, they argue that the concept of the eternal Sonship of the Word must follow from

³⁹ John Henry Newman, *Tracts Theological and Ecclesiastical* (London, 1874), 237-8 cited by DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 173.

⁴⁰ Papandrea writes, “DeSimone maintains that Novatian thought before the Word proceeded from God, the Word did not exist as a separate divine person. But Novatian did not say this. In fact, if he had, he would have given ammunition for the same Sabellians he was arguing against,” *Trinitarian Theology*, 337 n. 185 and see also 341.

⁴¹ Idem.

⁴² Sed qui ante omne tempus est, semper in Patre fuisse dicendus est. Nec enim tempus illi assignari potest qui ante tempus est. Semper enim in Patre, ne Pater non semper sit Pater.

Novatian's use of *semper* in *Trin.* 31.3.⁴³ In fact, the final phrase in the passage ("lest the Father be not always the Father") may be speaking directly to Novatian's emphasis on the Father's immutability, rather than to an implied Sonship.⁴⁴ I will look more closely at the meaning of *semper* in the next section.

Mattei, however, follows part of Pelland's argument and concludes that Novatian neither teaches an "impersonal" state of the Word nor explicitly conceives of eternal generation.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Mattei accepts that Novatian speaks within the tradition of the Two-stage logos theories. I am unconvinced by his position that Novatian uses spatial terms such as *in*, *ex*, *cum*, and *apud* in only a figurative manner.⁴⁶ By suggesting only a figurative meaning to spatial terms, Mattei denies that Novatian is trying to contrast the Son's nature with the Father's.⁴⁷ Therefore, Mattei's position can only be upheld by negating Novatian's presentation of the Father's divine nature, especially throughout *Trin.* 1-8.⁴⁸ In contrast to that assessment, I am arguing that Novatian's theology of the

⁴³ Pointing to *Trin.* 17.3 and 31.3-4, Papandrea acknowledges that "Novatian implies that the Word is not properly called the Son until the incarnation, but this cannot be pushed too far, since he maintains that the Father is always a Father, and the eternally preexistent Word is substantially the same person as the Son, at least in His divine nature," *Trinitarian Theology*, 338 n. 187.

⁴⁴ See my comments in chapter 4 on the Father's immutability in the section, "*Aeternus* and *aeternitatis*."

⁴⁵ Mattei, "*De Trinitate* 31," 198.

⁴⁶ Mattei specifically warns that accepting positions of the Son in respect to the Father creates a false, materialistic understanding of *Trin.*'s theology, *Ibid.* 195.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁴⁸ We can compare Novatian's understanding of the Word's generation with that of Irenaeus. Barnes describes Irenaeus' teaching with the following: "Whatever is said about God cannot run contrary to the reality or nature of Spirit. In particular, if we think about the generation of the Word we cannot think of a transition in the life of the Word from 'in' God to 'out' of God, since these are spatial notions which cannot be applied to Spirit. As spirit, the Word is always entirely 'in' God and 'outside' of God. We must completely purge our thoughts of any place-related notions of causality. The Word is so completely and perfectly present 'here' and 'there' that we must think of a continuous presence, distinguished not according to place by activity, not in any sort of either/or localization. When the Word is generated from the Father, he is not by that fact removed from previous indwelling 'in' the Father. When the Word is present 'in' union with the flesh, he is not by that fact removed from any 'where' he was before. The Word is in the Father, in the cosmos, and, later, in the flesh of Jesus," "Irenaeus's Trinitarian Theology," 83. Novatian's presentation of the Father as infinite and the Son as distinguished by his exteriorization and ability to be sent challenges everything mentioned above in regard to Irenaeus' theology of the Son. In

one, unique, and Supreme Father guides and orders his understanding of the Son's nature.⁴⁹

I agree with Mattei in so far as he accepts a lack of evidence for determining Novatian's teaching on this matter. However, Mattei's final conclusion overreaches the evidence. His understanding of Novatian's logic prompts him to suggest that Novatian inherently accepts the Word's personal, eternal distinction—even though Mattei acknowledges that Novatian could not quite articulate this position. Although Novatian does not offer direct testimony on this topic, I believe he does not argue for the Son's equality with the Father in light of his description of the stages of his exteriorization out of the Father (i.e., “inside” to outside”). If I am correct that Novatian's spatial language cannot be read figuratively, a point I argue in regard to Novatian's topological theology, then the language of the Son's stages of exteriorization indicates that the Son's divine nature does not equal the Father's. Essentially, Novatian's use of spatial language designates change for the Son, a change in place and (probably) a new status of distinction from the Father. Change in all cases, as I discuss in chapter 4, stands at odds

other words, Novatian's Word Christology does not share important assumptions about the nature of the Son's divinity of the sort we find in Irenaeus' Word Christology.

⁴⁹ I think it is useful to remember that Papandrea and Mattei propose, to one degree or another, that Novatian's inclusion of temporal and spatial language regarding the Son's distinction from the Father cannot be understood as having any literal meaning; both believe that Novatian uses the terms as figuratively pointing to a causal or logical relationship. Although Novatian may not have known Origen's work, it is important to note that Papandrea and Mattei's method of interpretation cannot be used to understand all theology from the early to middle of the 2nd century. In fact, more often than not, the interpretation these scholars give sound as if they are explaining Origen's theology rather than Novatian's. Origen writes, for example, in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 7.7.13.9: “[The Son] who is over all has no one over himself. For he himself is not later than the Father, but from the Father. But the wisdom of God has granted that this same thing be understood of the Holy Spirit as well, where it says, ‘The Spirit of the Lord filled the earth, and he who contains all things, has knowledge of his voice.’ If, therefore the Son is called ‘God over all’ and the Holy Spirit is recorded to contain all things, but God is the Father ‘from whom are all things,’ then clearly the nature and essence of the Trinity, which is over all things, are shown to be one.” According to my understanding of the theology in *Trin.*, Novatian could never have written a passage such as this, even though this is essentially what Papandrea thinks Novatian teaches.

with the Father's eternity, simplicity, and immutability. Although Novatian does not ultimately clarify the implications of the Son's exteriorization, the terms and language he associates with the Supreme God's divine nature cannot conform to those with which he describes the Son as coming out of the Father.

The Word as Aeternus

Mattei notes that Novatian uses *aeternus* in association with the Father, Son, body of believers, and the Spirit.⁵⁰ He also points out that Novatian speaks about the human association or contact with divinity as leading to a state of eternity.⁵¹ Because of the variety of contexts in which Novatian uses *aeternus*, Mattei identifies Novatian's use of the term as analogical;⁵² depending on the subject being described, *aeternus* can refer to absolute divine eternity or the immortality which comes from the grace or will of God.⁵³ Mattei, however, mistakenly assumes that references connecting the Son to *aeternus* and *aeternitas* reflect the same meaning as Novatian's understanding of the Father's eternity. There is, in fact, no point at which Novatian connects these terms to the Son in a manner comparable to his explanation of the Father's eternity.

I demonstrated in chapter 4, and pointed out above, that Novatian defined the Father's nature as eternal (*aeternus*) by asserting that the Father lacks a beginning or birth. The *aeternus* Father, by definition, cannot have a *principium*, *originum*, *initium*, or

⁵⁰ Mattei, "De Trinitate 31," 188.

⁵¹ He cites *Trin.* 15.7's reference to John 8:51: "Si quis uerbum meum seruauerit, mortem non uidebit in aeternum." I mention this topic in relation to my discussion of deification in the final section of chapter 6.

⁵² Mattei, "De Trinitate 31," 188-189.

⁵³ For example, when describing the man's association with the Holy Spirit, Novatian writes in *Trin.* 29.16, "He brings our bodies, by this operation of His in us, to eternity (*aeternitatem*) and to the resurrection of immortality (*immortalitates*), inasmuch as He accustoms them to be mingled in Himself with celestial power and to be associated with the divine eternity (*divina aeternitate*) of His Holy Spirit."

natum; Novatian accepts this principle of theological philosophy and presents it in a manner comparable to both Cicero and Tertullian.⁵⁴ I also showed that Novatian treats the Father's eternality as related to the Father's lack of time. He does not, however, make these two concepts synonymous. Furthermore, I pointed out that Novatian connected the concept of time to the creation of the world. His approach to the Son's divinity carries with it the affirmation that the Word is God, despite the fact that the categories used to describe him contrast with the definition and attributes of the Father's divinity. In this section, I am arguing that Novatian's use of *aeternus* in relation to the Son is primarily a Scriptural designation, which Novatian explains through the idea of participation and union with the divine nature, rather than in the narrowest and most exclusive definition which he reserves for the Father.

Before outlining Novatian's association of the Son with the term *aeternus*, it is important to recall the fact that Novatian means it frequently as synonymous with "immortal." He writes, "If Christ is only man, how does He say: 'If any man keep my word, he will never see death (*mortem non videbit in aeternum*)'? What is never seeing death but immortality (*immortalitas*)?"⁵⁵ In this case, man's obedience and faithfulness to Christ lead to immortality. Novatian also describes God's establishment of man in the Garden of Eden as a place of immortal life with the term *aeternus*. "He created for the special occupation of our first parents," writes Novatian, "a Paradise in the East as a world of eternal life (*aeternae vitae*)."⁵⁶ In the first passage cited above, Novatian defines his use of *aeternus* by the concept of immortality (*immortalitas*). In both

⁵⁴ See chapter 4's section, "*Aeternus* and *aeternitatis*."

⁵⁵ *Trin.* 15.7: Si homo tantummodo Christus, quomodo ait: *Si quis uerbum meum seruauerit, mortem non uidebit in aeternum?* Mortem in aeternum non uidere, quid aliud quam immortalitas est?

⁵⁶ *Trin.* 8.2: Qui peculiarem protoplastis aeternae uitae mundum quendam paradysum in oriente constituit.

passages, the subjects who receive or partake in this immortal life (the faithful believers in the first case and Adam and Eve in the second) clearly have a beginning and birth. We therefore know, without Novatian's clarification in all cases, that *aeternus* can designate immortal life as something provided for directly by God.

When Novatian attaches *aeternus* to the Son, he does so in reference to specific Scripture passages and within the context of offering everlasting life. One instance is in reference to John 6:51 when Jesus identifies himself as the bread of life. Novatian writes,

If Christ is only man, how could He say: 'I am the bread of eternal life (*panis uitae aeternae*) that came down from heaven,' when man who is himself mortal neither can be the bread of life (*panis uitae*), nor has descended from heaven, since no matter of frailty can be found in heaven? [*Trin.* 14:14]⁵⁷

Novatian's justification for Jesus calling himself the *panis uitae aeternae* does not equate to identifying the Son with the definition he ascribes to the Father as *aeternus*. Likewise, he calls man's graced, immortal life *aeterna vita*. Therefore, Novatian emphasizes God's gift of immortality to man with the term *aeternus*.

Another passage also contextualizes Novatian's approach to using the term *aeternus* with the Son. In *Trin.* 15, Novatian writes,

If Christ is only man, how is it that He himself says: "And whoever sees and believes in Me, shall never die (*non morietur in aeternum*)"? Whereas he who trusts (*credit*) in a mere man is said to be accursed, he who believes (*credit*) in Christ is not accursed; on the contrary, it is stated that he will never die (*in aeternum non moriturus*). Consequently, if He is only man, as the heretics would have it, how is it that whoever believes (*credit*) in Him shall never die (*non morietur in aeternum*), since he who trusts (*confidit*) in man is considered accursed? Or if he is not accursed, but rather, as one reads, destined for the

⁵⁷ Si homo tantummodo Christus, quomodo refert: *Ego sum panis uitae aeternae qui de caelo descendi*, cum neque panis uitae homo esse possit ipse mortalis nec de caelo descenderit nulla in caelo constituta materia fragilitatis? The references to Jesus providing eternal life to man in John 6 all revolve around the Father giving to the Son.

attainment of eternal life (*ad aeternae uitae*), Christ is not man only but God. [Trin. 16.1]⁵⁸

The gift of eternal life (phrased as *non morietur in aeternum* and *aeterna uita*) refers to mankind's possible future. In chapter 6, I discuss Novatian's argument for Christ's identification as God based upon Christ's obedience. I read Novatian's use of *credere* and *confidere* to be related to the topic of obedience in that both terms refer to some alignment with the Father's will. Therefore, the connection Novatian makes between Christ and the offer of *uita aeterna* should not be compared with the definition of the Father as *aeternus*. Instead, Novatian is highlighting the result of obedience to God, which is immortality.

I note above that Novatian describes the Garden of Eden as a place designed to provide for *vita aeterna*. Novatian suggests that man's creation in the image of God provides mankind with the chance to be obedient and to live forever (*aeternus*) or to disobey God, which leads to mortality.⁵⁹ He concludes, "Whence, indeed, hated mortality (*mortalitatis*) comes back upon him. He could have avoided mortality by obedience (*oboedientia*), but he subjected himself to it by his headlong and perverse

⁵⁸ Si homo tantummodo Christus, quomodo ipse dicit: *Et omnis qui uidet et credit in me, non morietur in aeternum*? Sed enim qui in hominem solitarium credit et nudum, maledictus dicitur, hic autem qui credit in Christum, non maledictus, sed in aeternum non moriturus refertur. Ex quo si aut homo est tantum, ut haeretici uolunt, quomodo quisquis in eum credit non morietur in aeternum, cum maledictus esse teneatur qui confidit in homine? Aut si non maledictus, sed potius ad aeternae uitae consecutionem, ut legitur, destinatus, non homo tantummodo Christus, sed et Deus.

⁵⁹ Trin. 1.10: "On the one hand, man ought to be free lest the image of God serve in unbecoming manner. On the other hand, a law had to be imposed that unrestrained liberty might not break forth even to contempt for its Giver. Hence, man might receive either merited rewards or due punishments as the result of his actions, recognizing these actions as his own doings, because it was in his power to act, through the movement of his mind in the one or the other direction." (Nam et liber esse debuerat, ne incongruenter Dei imago seruiret, et lex addenda, ne usque ad contemptum dantis libertas effrenata prorumperet, ut et praemia condigna et merita poenarum consequenter exciperet, suum iam habens illud, quod motu mentis in alterutram partem agitare uoluisset.

determination to be God.”⁶⁰ From this passage and from *Trin.* 16.1 (quoted in the previous paragraph), we see that man’s obedience to God leads to man’s ability to have immortal (*aeternus*) life. Christ’s role is that of mediator.⁶¹ Novatian says that man can enjoy *aeternus* life because God grants immortality through obedience or through Christ. Novatian argues that Christ’s identification as God is based (in part) on his own obedience to the Father; therefore, I think it is impossible to argue from the passages above that Novatian is using the term *aeternus* in an equivalent manner for both the Father and the Son. If Novatian presumes that the Son is *aeternus* in the manner which he defines the Father, then the examples above do not provide evidence for it.

Mattei looks to *Trin.* 14.13 as an indication that the Son shares eternity with the Father.⁶² Novatian states,

If Christ is only man, how is it that ‘as the Father has life (*uitam*) in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life (*uitam*) in Himself,’ when man cannot have life in himself after the manner (*cum exemplo*) of God the Father, because he is not glorious in eternity (*in aeternitate sit gloriosus*), but is made with the perishable matter of mortality. [*Trin.* 14.13]⁶³

Although Novatian assigns to the Word a unique reception of the Father’s “life,” I disagree with Mattei’s conclusion about this text for three reasons. First, since Novatian refers to both eternity and immortality with the term *aeternus*, we must decide which

⁶⁰ *Trin.* 1.11: Ex quo mortalitatis invidia utique in ipsum redit, qui cum illam de oboedientia posset euadere, in eandem incurrit, dum ex consilio peruerso Deus esse festinat.

⁶¹ See *Trin.* 14.8 and also *Trin.* 21.8, 23.7, and 31.22 which all quote 1 Tim. 2:5. *Trin.* 31.22 states, “Thus ‘the Mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus’ has power—since He is God—over every creature subjected to Him by His own Father, together with all creation subject to Him.”

⁶² Mattei, “*De Trinitate* 31,” 188-189. Papandrea boldly interprets *Trin.* 14.13 with the following: “Since the Son (like the Father) has life ‘in Himself,’ which Novatian interprets as indicating an eternal existence, Christ must be more than a mere human. Humans are mortal and perishable, and therefore have no eternal glory. Christ, on the other hand, had life ‘in Himself,’ and therefore does have eternal glory, even though His life is originally derived from the Father. So even though His divinity is a derived divinity, Christ is divine,” *Trinitarian Theology*, 173.

⁶³ Si homo tantummodo Christus, quomodo *sicut Pater in se uitam habet, ita dedit Filio uitam habere in semetipso*, cum exemplo Patris Dei homo in se uitam habere non possit, cum non in aeternitate sit gloriosus, sed in materia mortalitatis effectus?

definition Novatian applies in this passage. Novatian's position on the Son includes a unique relationship to the Father's eternity, which he expresses with the phrase *cum exemplo* ("after the manner"). This is not the same as claiming, as Mattei and others do, that the definition of the Father as *aeternus* necessarily carries the same understanding when Novatian associates the Word with *aeternus* and *aeternitas*.⁶⁴

Second, Novatian contrasts existence in eternity with man's constitution, which contains mortal parts.⁶⁵ In fact, *Trin.* 1.12 refers to the idea that God removed man from the Garden of Eden since man could have stayed there living forever (*viven in aeternum*). All references to *aeternus*, including those which Novatian attaches to the Son, relate to the Father sharing deathless life or life which never ends. The Father's eternity is based upon His having neither beginning nor end. Participation in everlasting life is enough for Novatian to identify such life with the term *aeternus*. Since the Son has a beginning and birth, we cannot conclude that Novatian intends the connection between the Son and the term *aeternus* to be equivalent to the Father as *aeternus*.

In the last chapter I identified Novatian's insistence on the Word's preeminence in glory over the world, because the Word superseded the world temporally.⁶⁶ The third reason I doubt Mattei's interpretation stems from Novatian's other reference to glory:

If Christ is only man, how does He say: "And now glorify Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was"? If He had glory with God before the world was and retained His glory with the Father, certainly He existed before the world. For He could not have had this glory unless He had existed before the

⁶⁴ Although Novatian does not discuss the immortality of angels, we might assume that Novatian's argument would rely on the quality of the Father's sharing immortal life with them. Like man in the Garden, they too could be described in Novatian's theology as possessing and sharing in eternity.

⁶⁵ According to Novatian's theology, everything with a beginning at least potentially shares in mortality, unless God wills immortality, as Novatian assumes God originally did in the case of man.

⁶⁶ See the section in chapter 6, "The Word is before the world."

world, so as to keep the glory. No one who possesses anything can have anything unless He existed before it.” [*Trin.* 16.6]⁶⁷

Although Novatian makes this statement not long after he speaks about Christ’s glory in eternity, he limits his description of the Son’s divinity strictly to temporal precedence over the world. If we agree with Mattei’s interpretation of *Trin.* 14.13, then we must view the argument of 16.6, just two chapters later, as entirely ineffectual. A better interpretation of the connection Novatian makes between *aeternus*, *gloria*, and the Son derives from the Son’s mediating relationship between the Father and creation. The Father invests the Son with glory and eternity in order to share these attributes with human beings.

Novatian’s Use of Semper and Tempus

Two of the most recent works on Novatian claim that a literal reading of the temporal language associated with the Son’s generation in *Trin.* misinterprets his theology. Mattei argues that Novatian employs temporal language about the Father and Son, but that Novatian neuters it of meaning by affirming the Son’s eternity.⁶⁸ Papandrea thinks Novatian’s temporal language is not in accordance with his true theological meaning.⁶⁹ Both authors identify Novatian’s language of temporality as contributing to the distinction between the Father and the Son. They both also elaborate on their understanding of the Son having a divine nature equal to the Father’s by arguing

⁶⁷ Si homo tantummodo Christus, quomodo dicit: *Et nunc honorifica me gloria quam habebam apud te priusquam mundus esset?* Si antequam mundus esset gloriam habuit apud Deum et claritatem tenuit apud Patrem, ante mundum fuit; nec enim habuisset gloriam, nisi ipse prius fuisset, qui gloriam posset tenere. Nemo enim habere aliquid poterit, nisi ante ipse fuerit qui aliquid tenet.

⁶⁸ Mattei, “*De Trinitate* 31,” 187.

⁶⁹ See Papandrea, *Trinitarian Theology*, 337-342. He states, “Though he uses the language of time, Novatian knows that this is before time, and therefore outside of the realm of temporality,” *Ibid.* 341.

that Novatian establishes the divine hierarchy as an atemporal causality; the temporal language Novatian uses functions only as a figurative indication of this relationship.⁷⁰

Some scholars have suggested that the primary basis of the distinction between the Father and Son lies, at least in part, in the Father's logical or causal supremacy.⁷¹ Such a reading downplays any distinction in the divine natures of the Father and Son. Against this position, I argue that Novatian identifies the Son with temporal categories in order to help articulate the lesser quality of the Son's divine nature from that of the Father. Such a distinction in divine nature does not contradict the ontological connection Novatian affirms between the Father and Son, since the ontological connection is causal in nature. Novatian uses language about a shared or derived substance in harmony with the idea that the Son possesses diminished attributes.

The specific terms Novatian uses to address the generation also offer us insights into his theology of his understanding of the Son's ontology. Novatian, for example, says that the Word "is discerned in the substance of power proceeding from God" (*in substantia prolatae a Deo uirtutis agnoscitur*), in *Trin.* 31.2.⁷² It would appear at first sight from this statement that Novatian is drawing on the tradition which classifies the Word as "Power," as it is found in Justin, Hippolytus, and Tertullian, among others.⁷³ Among those authors, "power" is used as a category for speaking of the Word in light of

⁷⁰ Mattei, "*De Trinitate* 31," 187; Papandrea argues, "The Father precedes the Son only in the sense of causality. Since the Son's existence is derived from the Father, the Father is necessarily the cause of the Son... Although the Son of God is generated from the Father, He exists eternally within the Father as the Word," *Trinitarian Theology*, 338.

⁷¹ D'Alès, *Novatien*, 123; DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 170; Papandrea, *Trinitarian Theology*, 70, 73; Mattei, "*De Trinitate* 31," 195.

⁷² Translation is DeSimone's, but I removed his indefinite article before "power." Papandrea also translates the passage "in the substance of power," but see Mattei, "*De Trinitate* 31, 171, who translates this passage like DeSimone, "mai se reconnaît dans la substance d'une force proférée par Dieu."

⁷³ See, for example, Justin's *Dial.* 128 and *Noet.* 11.1.

personal distinction.⁷⁴ However, I do not think Novatian imports this theological tradition into *Trin.* His focus is on the term *substantia*.⁷⁵ The Word/Son, as a second person who shares in the works of God and therefore the *potestas* and *virtus* of the Father, is the divine being who shares in the Father's *substantia*. In this passage, Novatian emphasizes the connection between Christ and the enactment of the power of the Father, since Christ shares in the Father's substance. Again we see the ontological connection rather than an ontological equality between the Father and Son.

Part of Mattei and Papandrea's argument for the equality of nature between the Father and the Son includes the notion that the Son must possess eternal distinction.⁷⁶ The difficulty of interpreting Novatian on this topic comes from the fact that he expresses himself in two seemingly contradictory ways. About the Son's generation and temporality, he states: 1) that the Word "is before all time (*tempus*)" because the Word was "always (*semper*) in the Father," and 2) that the Word (supposedly his existence) comes after (*post*) the Father, who is *prior*. We must determine what Novatian sees as the relationship between the terms *tempus* and *semper*, as well as what he means in his insistence of the Father's temporal priority over the Son (i.e., that the Son comes after [*post*] the Father).

Novatian comments directly on the Son's generation in *Trin.* 31.2-3. In the first part of this section, Novatian speaks about the birth and procession of the Son, writing,

Of Him when He willed (*quando ipse uoluit*), the Word, who is the Son, was born (*natus*). The Word is to be understood here not as a sound that strikes the air nor

⁷⁴ Thus the Son is identified as Word, Power, Angel, etc., with distinct theological ideas attached to each classification.

⁷⁵ See *Trin.* 31.4 and my discussion of this passage below in the section "Substance of the Word."

⁷⁶ I am avoiding saying "eternally distinct person," because that would confuse two issues: 1) whether the Son was distinct from the Father while "in" the Father, or 2) whether the Son being "in" the Father is meant to be taken literally. I will address this topic below.

the tone of the voice forced from the lungs, but rather is discerned (*agnoscitur*) in the substance of a power proceeding from God (*in substantia prolatae a Deo uirtutis*). Apostle has never ascertained, prophet has not discovered, angel has not fathomed, nor has any creature known the hallowed secrets (*arcane*) of His sacred and divine birth (*sacrae et diuinae natiuitatis*). They are known to the Son alone, who has known the secrets (*secreta*) of the Father. [*Trin.* 31.2]⁷⁷

Novatian begins by connecting the Son's begetting to a certain time (*quando*). In terms of the Word's movement from inside the Father to outside, Novatian's framework conforms to the Word Christology traditions seen in chapter 5. The actual procession (*prolatae*)⁷⁸ of the Word happens by the will of the Father, a doctrine also in line with the Word tradition.⁷⁹ Furthermore, Novatian takes an explicit stand against the Sabellian description of the Word as a mere sound prior to coming forth.⁸⁰ In his response, he does not clearly say that the Word is a person prior the Word's begetting, which leaves open the question of whether he assumes eternal generation or a kind of quasi-personhood similar to that found in Tertullian's *Prax*.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Ex quo, quando ipse uoluit, sermo Filius natus est, qui non in sono percussi aeris aut tono coactae de uisceribus uocis accipitur, sed in substantia prolatae a Deo uirtutis agnoscitur, cuius sacrae et diuinae natiuitatis arcana nec apostolus didicit nec prophetae comperit nec angelus sciuit nec creatura cognouit; Filio soli nota sunt, qui Patris secreta cognouit.

⁷⁸ Novatian appears unconcerned with justifying his use of *profero/prolatio*. Because of its usage by Gnostic groups, Tertullian makes a case for using the term in *Prax.* 8. He recognizes the controversial nature of it, but he explains that the term is correct and traditional: "The Truth does not abstain from using that word and the fact and the origin represented by it, on the ground that heresy uses it: nay rather, heresy has taken over from the Truth that which it might build up into its own lie."

⁷⁹ Even the Valentinians and Ptolomeans held to the idea that the supreme God or Dyad willed the Aeons. See *Haer.* 1.1.1, 1.11.1, and 1.12.1. In developing the transcendent will of the supreme God, these groups also articulated the position that the lesser divine beings had no knowledge of their origin from the supreme God's will. For example, Tertullian states in *Prax.* 8, "Valentinus secludes (*discernit*) and separates (*separat*) his 'projections' from their originator and places them so far from him that an aeon is ignorant of its father." Irenaeus likewise mentions this teaching in *Haer.* 2.28.5.

⁸⁰ Novatian may also be rejecting the theology as *Noet.* presents it in 10.4: "In uttering what was formerly a sound..."

⁸¹ In *Prax.* 5, Tertullian describes the Word in the Father as a mental interlocutor: "And that you may understand this the more easily, observe first from yourself, as from the image and likeness of God, how you also have reason within yourself, who are a rational animal not only as having been made by a rational Creator but also as out of his substance having been made a living soul. See how, when you by reason argue silently with yourself, this same action takes place without you... So in a sort of way you have in you as a second <person> discourse by means of which you speak by thinking and by means of which you think by speaking." Warfield presents a strong argument for the eternal, personal distinctions of the Father, Son, and Holy spirit, in *Studies in Tertullian*, 38-82. He writes, in part, "The distinction of persons

Aside from the fact that the Word has a beginning and birth, Novatian also teaches that knowledge of the Word's birth remains an unbroachable mystery (*arcanum* and *secretum*) in *Trin.* 31.2. By making this claim, Novatian follows a theological precedent which Irenaeus also affirmed,

If any one, therefore, says to us, "How then was the Son produced by the Father?" we reply to him, that no man understands that production, or generation, or calling, or revelation, or by whatever name one may describe His generation, which is in fact altogether indescribable. [*Haer.* 2.28.6]⁸²

We recall that Novatian describes the Word's coming forth in light of when (*quando*) the Father chooses. His use of the temporal term in association with the Son's mysterious birth in *Trin.* 31.2 reinforces the distinction Novatian makes between the natures of the Father and Son. According to Novatian, all terms of temporality are illogical and impossible when related to the Father. The connection he makes between *quando* and the Son's mysterious birth reveals his commitment to articulating the ontological distinction between the Father and Son.

In the next passage, *Trin.* 31.3, Novatian makes two claims: 1) that the Son is before all time and always in the Father (taken by some scholars as indicating the Son's eternal generation) and 2) that the Father is prior to the Son (taken by other scholars as implying a temporality to the Son's generation and hence a beginning point of personal distinction). Novatian writes in *Trin.* 31.3,

Since He is begotten of the Father, He is always (*semper*) in the Father. I say "always," (*semper*) however not in such a manner as to prove that He is unborn (*innatum*), but to prove that He is born (*natum*). Now, He who is before all time

in the Godhead, accordingly, as Tertullian conceived them, were not created by the prolations of the Son and Spirit. These prolations merely brought into manifestation the distinction of persons already existing in the Godhead... It is the prolations, not the personal distinctions, which in his thought have a beginning and ending," Ibid. 66.

⁸² Si quis itaque nobis dixerit: Quomodo ergo Filius prolatus a Patre est? dicimus ei quia prolationem istam, siue generationem, siue nuncupationem, siue adapertionem, aut quolibet quis nomine vocaverit generationem eius inenarrabilem exsistentem, nemo novit.

(*ante omne tempus*) must be said to have been always (*semper*) in the Father; for no time (*tempus*) can be attributed (*assignari*) to Him who is before time (*ante tempus*). He is always in the Father, lest the Father be not always the Father. On the other hand, the Father also precedes (*praecedit*) Him; for, as the Father, He must of necessity be prior (*prior*), because He who knows no origin (*originem*) must of necessity precede (*antecedit*) Him who has an origin (*originem*). At the same time the Son must be less (*minor*) than the Father, for He knows that He is in the Father, having an origin (*originem*), since he is born (*nascitur*). Although He has an origin (*originem*) inasmuch as He is born (*nascitur*), yet through His Father He is, in a certain manner (*quodammodo*), like Him by birth (*natiuitate*), because He is born (*nascitur*) of (*ex*) that Father, who alone has no origin (*originem solus non habet*).⁸³

The Father's eminence stands out in this passage, as well as a unity presented between the Father and the Son which follows from the Son's birth from the Father. However, Novatian retains and outlines critical distinctions about the attributes of the Father and Son's divinity: the Father, as unborn and having no origin, precedes the Son, whereas the Son has both a birth and an origin. Novatian asserts that it is the Son's beginning which makes him less than the Father.⁸⁴

Mattei interprets Novatian's use of *semper* as the acceptance of the Word's eternal Sonship.⁸⁵ Although he acknowledges that the phrase "eternal generation" must

⁸³ Hic ergo cum sit genitus a Patre, semper est in Patre. Semper autem sic dico, ut non innatum, sed natum probem. Sed qui ante omne tempus est, semper in Patre fuisse dicendus est. Nec enim tempus illi assignari potest qui ante tempus est. Semper enim in Patre, ne Pater non semper sit Pater, quia et Pater illum etiam praecedit, quod necesse est prior sit qua Pater sit, quoniam antecedit necesse est eum qui habet originem ille qui originem nescit, simul ut hic minor sit, dum in illo esse se scit, habens originem quia nascitur et per Patrem quodammodo, quamvis originem habet qua nascitur, uicinus in natiuitate, dum ex eo Patre qui originem solus non habet nascitur.

⁸⁴ Fausset, in his belief that Novatian need not be read as teaching the Son's subordination suggests, "The writer [Novatian], in his desire to controvert the Sabellian confusion of Persons in the Godhead (according to which 'Filius Dei' and 'Deus Pater' were not equal, but identical), fails to emphasise their transcendental equality. And yet even the expression 'minor Patre' has the highest Authority, and may signify precedence not in essence but in personality," *Novatiani Romanae*, xxxiv.

⁸⁵ Mattei, "*De Trinitate* 31," 198. Compare Fausset, who though suggesting that Novatian implies the Father and Son's equality, also writes, "[Novatian] says rather: 'principium natiuitatis ante omne tempus accepit' (p 121, l. 4); and twice in ch. xxxi asserts that the Son's 'birth' was 'quando pater uoluit' (pp 116, l. 4, 118, l. 5). It is a 'procession from the Father' before all time. Beyond this assertion of an extra-temporal generation the writer does not take us. He does not definitely affirm an eternal generation of the Son 'qua filius dei.' It must be added, that the passages already quoted suffice to shew that Novatian affirms the 'always' existence of the Word in the Father, *before* the generation of the Son: however hard it

be considered anachronistic to Novatian's actual articulation, Mattei decides that Novatian's logic requires a presumed principle of eternal generation. Such an interpretation, however, involves several questionable premises which I address in a moment. First, however, it is important to acknowledge that Novatian uses *semper* in reference to the Father's nature and in a way indicative of eternity.⁸⁶ As I have argued above, Novatian holds multiple meanings of certain terms, such as *aeternus* and *tempus*. We can only understand Novatian's meaning of these terms by the subject to whom he is ascribing them or to the manner in which he explains their usage. Mattei cannot simply point to the use of the same terms without demonstrating that Novatian uses them in the way Mattei assumes he does.

In regard to his reading of *Trin.* 31.3, Mattei's interpretation breaks down because of an incorrect understanding of Novatian's use of *tempus*. Mattei connects the term *semper* to Novatian's statement that the Word was from before time (*ante tempus*).⁸⁷ It appears that Mattei understands Novatian as holding one particular Platonic theory of time.⁸⁸ Mattei assumes that Novatian abides by the following model: there either is

may be to reconcile such language with his disclaimer of temporal relations," *Novatiani Romanae*, xxxviii. I disagree with Fausset's belief that Novatian has indeed rejected the use of temporal relations.

⁸⁶ See *Trin.* 4.4-5, quoted in chapter 4, in the section "*Aeternus* and *aeternitatis*."

⁸⁷ Mattei, "*De Trinitate* 31," 192. *Semper* and *ante tempus* are found in *Trin.* 31.3 and 16, respectively. See also Fausset who states in reference to *Trin.* 31.3, "And so we find that [Novatian's] Christology is no less subordinationist than Tertullian's, except in one particular: he allows room for the conception of an absolute and eternal distinction in the Godhead, when he allows that Divine relations are timeless," *Novatiani Romanae*, xxxiii. Tertullian also states that the Word is brought forth *ante tempus* (*Prax.* 6-7), yet I have also discussed in chapter 5 the reasons why many scholars think that he does not teach the eternal distinction of the Word; the argument focuses on the fact that Tertullian proclaims that the Son only becomes Son at a certain time and the latter is when the Father becomes Father. I am arguing that Novatian does not say that the Father is always Father in order to imply the Son's eternality, but to address the Father's immutability.

⁸⁸ I discuss this topic in chapter 4. See the section, "*Aeternus*: time as dependent on beginning and end." See also Papandrea who writes, "Though he uses the language of time, Novatian knows that this is before time, and therefore outside of the realm of temporality," *Trinitarian Theology*, 341. J. N. D. Kelly agrees and concludes: "Novatian does not tie the generation of the Son to creation, but argues that it is pre-temporal; since the Father is always Father, He must always have had a Son," in *Early Christian Doctrines*, 125.

divine atemporality (*aeternus*=*non tempus/ante tempus=semper*) or there is time (*tempus*) as associated with creation.⁸⁹ His belief that Novatian follows this either/or model allows him to read Novatian's use of *semper* as equating to *ante tempus*, which also presumes equivalence to *aeternus*. In Mattei's reading, Novatian's use of *semper* for the Son means the same thing as his use of *aeternus* for the Father.

In chapter 4, I called into question the narrow view of understanding the relationship between *aeternus/aeternitas* and *tempus*, by raising the probability of Novatian's familiarity with other Platonic articulations, Stoic ideas of time associated with the creation of the world, and the Aristotelian doctrine of eternal duration. Therefore, I disagree with Mattei and other scholars who read Novatian's references to the Son's existence prior to time as equivalent to his presentation of the Father's eternity.⁹⁰ Furthermore, I detail above how Novatian does not refer to the Son as *aeternus* in the same way that he defines the Father's nature with this term. Pelland was correct to reject such a connection and to point to Novatian's distinction in terminology

⁸⁹ In addition to the fact that the entire framework by which Novatian defines the Father's supreme and unique attributes is rendered moot by Mattei's association between *semper* and *aeternus*, it is also worth noting that Novatian employs *semper* with a range of implications. For example, he uses the term for the Spirit dwelling everlastingly with the apostles in *Trin.* 29.6: "Therefore, it is one and the same Spirit who is in the prophets and in the apostles. He was, however, in the former only for awhile; whereas He abides in the latter forever (*semper*).” Like his use of *aeternus* to mean both eternal and immortal, *semper* carried a range of implications. Mattei sees these issues through the perspective of a biblical notion of time versus a Platonic one, believing that Novatian should be read with the latter's framework of atemporality: "Entre le temps et l'éternité, le Romain n'insère aucun moyen terme: en qui il suit Tertullian. Plus précisément, de *Nat.* 2, 3, 5 (et *Herm.* 4, 1) à *Marc.* 1, 8, 3 (et 2, 3, 4-5), celui-ci était parvenu à ne plus seulement penser l'éternité comme une simple dilatation du temps, sans commencement ni fin—à se dégager par conséquent (au moins pour partie) d'une notion *biblique* pour rejoindre une conception *platonicienne*; il semble logique d'estimer que Novatien, pour qui Dieu 'non habet tempus', sur ce point le suit également," *De Trinitate* 31," 189.

⁹⁰ Papandrea entirely conflates all of these ideas, writing, "What is immortal is, by definition, outside of time and therefore has no beginning. The Father is the ultimate source of immortality, for while the Son is eternally preexistent, He has a source; the Father," *Trinitarian Theology*, 70. Of Novatian's identification of the Word as *protogenitus* (firstborn) DeSimone writes, "It is used in the metaphorical sense of pre-existence before creation; it implies a relationship to God which cannot be predicated even of angels or men, much less of other creatures. Christ, then, being eternal, has absolute supremacy over all natural creation," *Treatise of Novatian*, 85.

as important.⁹¹ His conclusion diverges from Papandrea, DeSimone, d'Alès, and Mattei who all argue that *Trin.* 31.3 provides evidence that Novatian implicitly or explicitly accepted the Son's eternal generation.⁹² Against the reading of these scholars and taking Pelland's assessment a step further, I propose that Novatian connects time with the world in a way which does not imply the Son's eternal generation.⁹³

Novatian's use of the term *tempus* does not find its meaning in the either/or model described above. Rather, Novatian treats *tempus* as specifically connected to the creation of the world and its subsequent progression. However, he also speaks about occurrences before time in a way which assumes temporal progression. Even if the Son's generation occurs prior to *tempus* (in the sense of the world's beginning and subsequent movements), Novatian nevertheless presents the Son's beginning as still subject to a form of temporal progression. Because Novatian does not follow the either/or model described above, there is a "when" (*quando*) to the Son's generation. The "when" of the Son's birth happened in a kind of "time before time," which is Novatian's way of maintaining the technical definition of *tempus* (as it relates to the world itself), while asserting a temporal element to the Son's generation prior to the world. By using this model which

⁹¹ Pelland, "Une passage difficile," 28-31. His work derives in part from that of Antonio Orbe, especially his *Hacia la Primera Teología de la Procesión del Verbo*, Estudios Valentinianos, 2 vols. (Rome, 1958), 532-539. Loi also suggests a distinction between the Son as immortal rather than eternal, *La Trinità*, 28-30. However, these authors do not make a sustained argument about the centrality of Novatian's use of the terms according to the theological philosophy of Novatian's times.

⁹² Papandrea, *Trinitarian Theology*, 337-9; DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 172-173; D'-Alès, *Novatien*, 173; Mattei, "De Trinitate 31," 187.

⁹³ See, for example, *Trin.* 8.11 in which Novatian connects the fixed laws of the universe's motions with time: "The world, this chariot of God and all that is therein, is guided by the angels and the stars. Although their movements are varied—bound, nevertheless, by fixed laws—we see them guided to their goals according to the time measure out to them."

defines *tempus* as related specifically to the world, Novatian is following a form of a teaching common to some Aristotelians, Stoics, and Middle Platonists.⁹⁴

My reading of Novatian's understanding of *tempus* makes it necessary to comment at greater length on his use of the term *semper*, especially his application of this term to the Father. In the previous chapter, I noted that *Noet.* identifies God as originally alone, yet also containing within Himself reason, wisdom, power, and mind.⁹⁵ For Tertullian, God also was alone, while still having reason with Him.⁹⁶ Both the author of *Noet.* and Tertullian claim that God became Father at some point in relation to the Word's generation or Incarnation. Novatian diverges from these authors by insisting that the Father is always (*semper*) Father; specifically, it appears that Novatian is rejecting Tertullian's comments in *Herm.* 3.4, in which Tertullian asserts that God became Father only at the Son's begetting.⁹⁷ Novatian's statement in *Trin.* 31.3 connects the presence of the Word in the Father to idea that the Father is always Father. It therefore functions as an affirmation of the Father's immutability. If the Supreme God becomes Father at some point, then the Supreme God changes. As shown above, any change in regard to the Father is impossible according to Novatian's theology. Against those scholars who read Novatian's statement as confirming the eternal personhood/Sonship of the Word,

⁹⁴ Warfield identifies a pre-temporal temporality which he finds in Tertullian's theology. Unfortunately, his analysis does not provide much depth. See Warfield, *Studies in Tertullian*, 50.

⁹⁵ *Noet.* 10.1-2

⁹⁶ *Prax.* 5.

⁹⁷ In *Herm.* 3.4 Tertullian argues, "For God is also a Father, and God is also a Judge, but He has not always been Father and Judge for the simple reason that He has always been God; for He could not be Father before the Son was, nor Judge before there was sin. Now there was a time when for Him there existed neither sin nor the Son, the former to make God a Judge, and the latter, a Father." Wolfson cites *Trin.* 31.2-4 as evidence that Novatian specifically challenges and rejects this passage from Tertullian, in *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, 196. He believes that Novatian corrects Tertullian, and writes the following to Tertullian *in persona* of Novatian: "When in your discussion of the preexistent Logos or Son you use the expression: 'He has not always been Father' or 'Father previous to the Son' or 'there was a time when...the Son' did not exist with the Father, you certainly do not use the terms 'always,' 'previous,' and 'time' in their literal sense," Idem. DeSimone quotes Wolfson with approval and claims, "Thus the Son exists *ab aeterno* in the Father and is eternally generated," *Treatise of Novatian*, 173.

Novatian seems to be accepting Tertullian's quasi-personhood of the Word as sufficient to claim that the Father is always Father.⁹⁸ The challenge Novatian poses to Tertullian's theology centers on the Father's immutability rather than the Son's personhood, which Novatian does not mention.

Novatian also makes a crucial connection between the terms *generare* and *nascere/nascor* in *Trin.* 31.3: "Since He is begotten (*genitus*) of the Father, He is always (*semper*) in (*in*) the Father. I say 'always' (*semper*), however, not in such a manner as to prove that He is unborn (*innatum*), but to prove that He is born (*natum*)."⁹⁹ Novatian is not arguing that *semper* equates to the Father's nature as *aeternus*. Had he been, he would not be connecting *semper* to terms which he explicitly denies as applicable to *aeternitas*, namely *generare*, *nascere*, or any notion associated with beginning, origin, or birth. Novatian's argument rests on the identification of the one God, who is the Father, as alone possessing eternity because of a lack of a beginning. By contrast, he explains the Son's birth and generation in conjunction with the term *semper*. Therefore, I read Novatian as linking *semper* in the passages cited above with terms of birth and generation, terms antithetical to the Father's divine nature as he has defined it throughout *Trin.*

Novatian further clarifies his association of the Son with a birth when he claims that the Son's birth makes him unequal to the Father. He says that the Son could not possibly be unborn, unbegotten, or have no beginning, "since [Father and Son] would have been found to be equal (*aequalis*)...Christ, then would have given rise to two

⁹⁸ DeSimone notes, "Tertullian does not deny that there is an eternal Word; only he would not call Him Son until He had appeared among men. God could be called Father only from that time onwards, *Treatise of Novatian*, 171.

gods.”⁹⁹ *Trin.* 31.3 expresses the same idea by claiming that the Son is less than (*minor*) the Father. Scholars who believe *aeternus* applies equally to the Son and Father miss the logic by which Novatian argues for the Father’s uniqueness in divine attributes. They also fail to account for the context of his proposal against the traditions mentioned above of Tertullian and Hippolytus. Like his predecessors, Novatian affirms that the Father always has the Word in Himself, yet unlike Tertullian and Hippolytus, he believes that the Word’s presence in the immutable Father demands the recognition of the Father’s permanent Fatherhood.

Novatian states that the Son was before all time (*ante omne tempus*) in his description of the Son’s birth and generation. *Tempus*, I demonstrated in chapter 4, relates to Novatian’s comments on the beginning and progression of the world where he juxtaposes these ideas with the attributes of the Father.¹⁰⁰ In the case of *Trin.* 31.3, Novatian states, “Now, He who is before all time (*ante omne tempus*) must be said to have been always (*semper*) in the Father; for no time can be attributed to Him who is before time (*Nec enim tempus illi assignari potest qui ante tempus est*).” Apart from repeating the same comment in *Trin.* 31.16,¹⁰¹ this is the only instance in which Novatian identifies the Word’s relation to time. Like Hippolytus and Tertullian before him, Novatian begins with the idea of the Word being always in the Father. The connection he makes to *tempus* and the world, however, does not result in the cross application of the Father’s attribute of eternity to the Son. Rather, the Son’s origin governs his distinction from the Father’s eternity apart from Novatian’s understanding of *tempus*. What

⁹⁹ *Trin.* 31. 6-8.

¹⁰⁰ See the section “*Aeternus*: time as dependent on beginning and end,” in chapter 4.

¹⁰¹ I treat this passage again in the next section.

Novatian has in mind for the time of the Son's generation is a pre-*tempus* temporality, an idea about time borrowed from Middle Platonists and Stoics.¹⁰²

Substance of the Word

In numerous passages, Novatian indicates that the birth of the Son from the Father means that the Son shares in the Father's substance.¹⁰³ Among the Word Christologies I discuss in chapter 5, metaphors such as "fire from fire" and "shoot from root" speak to a clear tradition which teaches that the Father passes on the divine nature (in some cases substance) to the Son. The logic of this tradition equates to the principle that when X nature generates something, it generates something with X nature (X from X). However, we have also seen that some authors in the Word Christology tradition do not employ this logic to say that the Son possesses a divine nature equal to the Father's. The teaching allowing for an inequality among divine beings in some ways parallels the Platonic idea that the Supreme God's nature shares an ontological connection to lesser divine beings as well as to the human soul.¹⁰⁴ Although Novatian suggests that human beings can participate in divine attributes, such as immortality, he also follows Scripture in identifying the Son as uniquely related to the Father. The Son is the *unigenitus* and

¹⁰² Pollard likewise comes to this conclusion, and he appropriates for his description of Novatian's theology Warfield's use of the phrase "pre-temporally temporal" to describe the Son's generation in Tertullian's theology, *Johannine Christology*, 74. Unfortunately, Pollard's analysis is extremely brief and cannot effectively challenge the more recent works by Mattie and Papandrea.

¹⁰³ Although I agree with much in Simmonetti's work, I disagree with his understanding that the Son's ontological subordination excludes a sharing in substance with the Father. See his "Beginnings of Theological Reflection," 217 and "Alcune osservazioni," 774-775. Cf. Mattei, "*De Trinitate* 31," 228-336. Again, Mattei acknowledges that Novatian speaks about the inequality of the Father and Son, but reduces the meaning of "inequality" to causal priority, rather than to a diminution of attributes. I explain below why I think Novatian's intellectual environment allows him to hold ontological subordination and a sharing of substance simultaneously.

¹⁰⁴ See the section "The relationship between God and man," in chapter 1.

primogenitus. Even these terms, however, amplify the uniqueness of the Father since it is antithetical to the Father's nature to be associated with generation or a beginning.¹⁰⁵

Despite Novatian's rejection of Tertullian's identification of the substance of God as spirit, he shares with Tertullian the idea that birth, generation, or procession means that a common nature is shared.¹⁰⁶ As noted in chapter 5, Tertullian followed Justin and others in making use of metaphors associated with the X from X principle. Tertullian also emphasized the term *substantia* to speak about the unity of God. Novatian likewise claims that the Father shares His *substantia* with the Son, but Novatian does not call this "spirit," nor does he employ the metaphors mentioned.

Tertullian uses his teaching that the Father and Son share the divine substance to chastise the Sabellian idea which "thinks it impossible to believe in one God unless it says that both Father and Son and Holy Spirit are one and the same."¹⁰⁷ He wonders why they formulate their idea of unity "as though the one <God> were not all <these things> in this way also, that they are all of the one, namely by unity of substance (*substantiae unitatem*)."¹⁰⁸ He continues by affirming that the "mystery of the economy"¹⁰⁹

disposes the unity into trinity (*unitatem in trinitatem*), setting forth Father and Son and Spirit as three, three however not in quality (*statu*) but in sequence (*gradu*), not in substance (*substantia*) but in aspect (*forma*), not in power (*potestate*) but in <its> manifestation (*specie*), yet of one substance (*unius substantiae*) and one quality (*unius status*) and one power (*unius potestatis*), seeing it is one God from

¹⁰⁵ *Trin.* 31.14. See also 21.4 for Novatian's interpretation of Col. 1:15's use of *primogenitus* and 13.1 for a citation of John 1.14, with its use of the term *unigenitus*.

¹⁰⁶ See Christopher Stead's, "Divine Substance in Tertullian," 64, where he notes that the incarnation could not have altered the divine substance just as the human substance could not be altered by the Word joining himself to it.

¹⁰⁷ *Prax.* 2: Dum unicum deum non alias putat credendum quam si ipsum eundemque et patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum dicat:

¹⁰⁸ *Prax.* 2.: Quasi non sic quoque unus sit omnia dum ex uno omnia, per substantiae scilicet unitatem.

¹⁰⁹ *Prax.* 2: οἰκονομίας sacramentum.

whom those sequences and aspects and manifestations are reckoned out in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. [*Prax.* 2]¹¹⁰

Tertullian identifies the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as sharing in one *substantia*, *status*, and *potestas*, which signify different aspects of divine unity. However in the context of this dissertation, I am most interested in Tertullian's emphasis on the Trinitarian sharing of substance.¹¹¹ That the Son and the Spirit come from the Father means that they share in the Father's substance.

I previously noted that Novatian identifies the Word as the substance of divine power (*substantia uirtutis*) in *Trin.* 31.2.¹¹² With this phrase, Novatian seems to blend two of the categories of divine unity which Tertullian mentions in *Prax.* 2 (quoted above). Novatian also reiterates the content of this passage in *Trin.* 31.4, but without including the concept of "power":

He, therefore, when the Father willed, proceeded (*processit*) from the Father; and He who was in the Father, because He was of the Father, was afterwards with the Father since He—namely that divine substance (*substantia diuina*) whose name is the Word, through whom 'all things were made and without whom nothing was made'—proceeded from the Father. [*Trin.* 31.4]¹¹³

Novatian therefore accepts the use of the term *substantia* for speaking about what the Father shares with the Son. Later in this chapter, and after he gathers together his arguments for the divinity of the Son and the distinction of the divine persons, Novatian writes,

¹¹⁰ Quae unitatem in trinitatem disponit, tres dirigens patrem et filium et spiritum, tres autem non statu sed gradu, nec substantia sed forma, nec potestate sed specie, unius autem substantiae et unius status et unius potestatis, quia unus deus ex quo et gradus isti et formae et species in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti deputantur.

¹¹¹ Daniélou reminds us that Tertullian's insistence on shared substance in this passage relates to the fact that he identifies this substance as *spiritus*, *Origins of Latin Christianity*, 347.

¹¹² See the section "Novatian's use of *semper* and *tempus*" above.

¹¹³ Hic ergo quando Pater uoluit, processit ex Patre; et qui in Patre fuit, [processit ex Patre; et qui in Patre fuit,] quia ex Patre fuit, cum Patre postmodum fuit, quia ex Patre processit, substantia scilicet illa diuina, cuius nomen est uerbum, per quod *facta sunt omnia et sine quo factum est nihil*.

From this, the true and eternal Father is shown [to be] the one God, the divine power (*uis diuinitatis*) having been sent out from Him alone, and communicated and extended in the Son, it has been reverted back to the Father again through the sharing of substance (*substantiae communionem*). [*Trin.* 31.20]¹¹⁴

In *Trin.* 31.2, 31.4, and 31.20, Novatian blends the terms for substance, power, and divinity in such a way that he appears to be simply asserting the notion that the Son coming from the Father equates to the idea that Son shares the Father's divine being.

Novatian also relies on the term *natura* to convey the X from X principle, or the shared substance of the Father and the Son:

[Scripture] not only calls Him the Son of Man but has also been accustomed to refer to Him as the Son of God, so that He is both because He is of both. Otherwise—if He were only the one—He could not be the other. Nature (*natura*) itself demands that we believe that he is a man who is of man. Likewise nature (*natura*) demands that we believe that he is God who is of God. [*Trin.* 11.6-7, modified slightly]¹¹⁵

In this passage, *natura* refers to the physical and metaphysical laws, or the order of things and beings, even God.¹¹⁶ Novatian demonstrates that his principle of a substance generating the same kind of substance is an *a priori* argument, as long as one accepts the revelation that the Father generates another from Himself.

¹¹⁴ *Trin.* 31.20: Vnde unus Deus ostenditur uerus et aeternus Pater, a quo solo haec uis diuinitatis emissa, etiam in Filium tradita et directa, rursum per substantiae communionem ad Patrem reuoluitur. Although Simonetti argues against the notion that Novatian relies on a substantial unity as a major basis for a relationship between the Father and Son, he suggests that *Trin.* 31.20 alludes to an entirely unclear theory of substantial unity which has more to do with the *flatus vocis*, in "Alcune osservazioni," 775. Furthermore, some scholars have taken this passage to mean the Novatian believed there would be an end for the Son's personal distinction by reabsorption into the Father. For this position, see Harnack, *History of Dogma* (2), 314 n. 2 and Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* II, 229. Weyer points out that Loofs, Ammundsen, and Torm shared this interpretation when arguing against it in *Novatianus De Trinitate Über den dreifaltigen Gott*. Edited by H. Weyer (Testimonia II: Düsseldorf, 1962), 204-206. DeSimone states, "Weyer has captured the true meaning of Novatian," *Treatise of Novatian*, 180. Pelland, "Une passage difficile," 34, 51, and Papandrea, *Trinitarian Theology*, 256, also agree that Novatian does not teach the final absorption of the Son into the Father. I agree with the latter scholars.

¹¹⁵ Nec hominis tantum dicit, sed et Dei referre consuevit, ut dum ex utroque est, utrumque sit, ne si alterum tantum sit, alterum esse non possit. Vt enim praescripsit ipsa natura hominem credendum esse qui ex homine sit, ita eadem natura praescribit et Deum credendum esse qui ex Deo sit.

¹¹⁶ *Natura* in this sense means the same as when Novatian declares in *Trin.* 4.9: "As the very nature of things demands, there cannot be two infinities." (Quoniam nec duo infinita esse possunt, ut rerum dictat ipsa natura.)

Behind Novatian's affirmation of the Son's generation stands the revelation of Scripture. Although *natura*, by his definition of it, offers the means of acknowledging the principle of X from X, Novatian introduces a variety of Biblical passages to explore this topic in greater depth. For example, he elaborates on the unique connection between the Son and the Father by highlighting the role of Christ as Mediator between God and man.¹¹⁷ He also emphasizes the unique identification of Christ as one who is in the form of the Father.¹¹⁸ In these matters, Novatian's theology always contains two parts: the identification of the Son as sharing the Father's substance as well as the assertion of the distinction between Father and Son.

When I discussed Novatian's exegesis of John 10:30 ("I and the Father are one"),¹¹⁹ I noted that Novatian presents the Son's divinity based on the harmony, love, and affection he shares with the Father.¹²⁰ Novatian also uses John 10:30 to affirm his X from X principle when he speaks about the Father and Son's unity in reference to the Son's birth (*nascor*) and procession (*procedo*).¹²¹ Elsewhere, his language does not

¹¹⁷ *Trin.* 21.8 states, "This is rightly so, since there is something in Him that surpasses every creature, inasmuch as the union of the divinity and the humanity seems to be secured in Him. For this reason, He who is declared to have been made 'the Mediator between God and man' is found to have associated in Himself both God and Man."

¹¹⁸ *Trin.* 22.4. Novatian connects the Son being in the form of God throughout *Trin.* 22 to the Son's unique birth, the imitation of the Father's works, his rank above all things, his divine power over all creatures, and his likeness to the Father. Papandrea believes that Novatian understands *forma* and *substantia* as synonymous, *Trinitarian Theology*, 77. Cf. D'Alès, *Novatien*, 115. Although Novatian does not use the terms interchangeably in the manner which Papandrea suggests, the meaning of the Son's sharing the *substantia* of the Father in some ways mirrors how Novatian discusses Christ as being in the form of God.

¹¹⁹ See chapter 6's section, "The Word as obedient to the Father: contrasting divine attributes."

¹²⁰ *Trin.* 27.4.

¹²¹ Cf. J. N. D. Kelly, who writes, "While on occasion speaking of 'the power of Godhead' or 'the divine majesty' being transmitted by the Father to the Son, and even of the community of being (*substantiae...communione*) between Them, he normally defines Their relationship (in marked contrast to Tertullian) in terms of moral unity. This comes out strikingly in his avoidance, when expounding texts like 'I and the Father are one' and 'He who has seen me has seen the Father', of any suggestion of unity of essence," *Early Christian Doctrines*, 125. Both of the texts which Kelly cites are, in fact, examples in which a unity of essence is indicated by Novatian. One example in which Novatian connects John 10:30 with the X from X principle can be found in *Trin.* 15.10 where he states, "If Christ is only man, what does

employ specific terminology of generation or birth, even though he implies the X from X principle. He states in *Trin.* 27.5, for example: “And since He is from the Father (*ex Patre*), whatever [the Father] is (*quicquid illud est*), the Son is, although the distinction remains, so that the one who [is] the Son is not the Father, because the one who is the Father [is] not the Son.”¹²² Novatian refers in this passage to the numerical or personal distinction which is central to his exegesis of the John 10:30. I will explain in the next section why I do not take the phrase *quicquid illud est* to refer to the Son’s ontological equality with the Father.¹²³

Inequality of the Father and the Son

Mattei and Papandrea argue that Novatian portrays the Son’s divine nature as equal to the Father’s, and yet subordinate in a causal or logical sense.¹²⁴ They are correct to point out that Novatian’s formulations about the Son’s divinity stem from the fact that

He mean when He says: ‘I and the Father are one’? How can ‘I and the Father be one,’ if He is not both God and Son, who therefore can be said to be one [with the Father] because He is of Him and because He is His Son and because He is born (*nascitur*) of Him inasmuch as He is found to have proceeded (*processisse*) from Him? This proves that He is also God” (translation modified slightly). (Si homo tantummodo Christus, quid est quod ait: *Ego et Pater unum sumus*? Quomodo enim *ego et Pater unum sumus*, si non et Deus est et Filius, qui idcirco unum potest dici, dum ex ipso est et dum Filius eius est et dum ex ipso nascitur, dum ex ipso processisse reperitur, per quod et Deus est?)

¹²² *Trin.* 27.5: Et quoniam ex Patre est, quicquid illud est, Filius est, manente tamen distinctione, ut non sit Pater ille qui Filius, quia nec Filius ille qui Pater est.

¹²³ Dunn states, “There is even a sense that Novatian may have considered Father and Son to be of different natures or essences, although this seemed to be too philosophical an issue for him to warrant investigating. The use of *quicquid* quickly dismisses the possibility of distraction on this arcane point. Unity is found in the fact that the Son is *ex Patre*,” “Diversity and Unity,” 399. This quotation summarizes Dunn’s approach to reading *Trin.* based on the assumption that Novatian avoids deep philosophical reflection in favor of a direct form of catechetical instruction. It is my opinion that Dunn therefore misses the depth and contours of Novatian’s thinking.

¹²⁴ A central portion of Papandrea’s argument can be found in *Trinitarian Theology*, 329-336. He concludes, “so that while Novatian makes it clear that the Son is subordinate to the Father in His incarnation, he does not imply that the Son is essentially inferior; that the Son’s divinity is of a lower form, or that the Son’s divine nature is anything less than equal to that of the Father,” 336. Mattei acknowledges that Novatian does not fully express his understanding of the Son’s generation, but nonetheless holds that Novatian’s logic about the theology of the Son must reject any point of an impersonal Word as well as any non-figurative reading of exteriorization language. He therefore concludes that Novatian “propose, semble-t-il, l’égalité de substance et l’inégalité d’origine,” “*De Trinitate* 31,” 198.

the Father is the origin or source of the Son. In fact, Novatian's X from X logic requires that the Son's existence derives exclusively and directly from the Father. However, I have shown in chapter 5 and in the previous section of this chapter that the acceptance of an X from X principle does not necessitate the teaching of ontological equality. Some philosophers and Christians shared the idea of divine figures possessing a degraded nature compared to the nature of the Supreme God.¹²⁵ Novatian's theology follows just such principles in that the Father shares his substance with the Son and also that the Son is ontologically subordinate to the Father.

Novatian consistently contrasts the attributes of the Father from those of the Son.¹²⁶ In so doing, he affirms that the Son is less than (*minor*)¹²⁷ the Father and denies that the Father and Son are equal (*aequalis*).¹²⁸ In *Trin.* 27.10, Novatian quotes John 10:36 in which Jesus states, "Do you say of Him whom the Father has made holy and sent into this world, 'You blaspheme,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"¹²⁹ Novatian explains this passage writing, "[The Son] declares that He has been made holy by His Father. Since, then, He receives sanctification (*sanctificatum*) from the Father, He

¹²⁵ Disregarding any possible connections, DeSimone simply asserts that Novatian shares nothing with Platonism on this count, "Again the Kenosis," 96.

¹²⁶ According to my reading and that of some other scholars, all of the discrepancies of attributes Novatian mentions between the Son and the Father reflect the Son's ontological subordination. See D'Alès' list of the attributes which Novatian uses to contrast the Father with the Son in *Novatien*, 122-123. See also below my citation and discussion of *Trin.* 31.6-11. For statements that the distinction in attributes equates to the Son's inferiority and subordination to the Father, see Peterson, "*Novaziano e Novazianismo*," 1979; Amann, "Novatien et novatianism," 827.

¹²⁷ *Trin.* 27.12 and 31.3.

¹²⁸ *Trin.* 31.6-7. One manuscript (*Jac*) affirms the use of *aequalis* in *Trin.* 31.18. Mattei follows P. Petitmengin, "Une nouvelle édition et un ancien manuscrit de Novatien," *REAug.* 21 (1975), 272. in his argument for replacing the more commonly found *inaequalitate* with *aequalitate* in this passage: "Cuius sic diuinitas traditur, ut non aut dissonantia aut aequalitate diuinitatis duos deos reddidisse uideatur." (His divinity is so presented to us that it may not appear, either through discordancy or through equality in the Godhead.) I agree with Mattei that the inclusion of the term *inaequalitate* would demonstrate a marked contrast from the rest of *Trin.* and therefore suggests an error of copyists.

¹²⁹ *Quem Pater sanctificauit, inquit, et misit in hunc mundum, uos dicitis quia blasphematis, quia dixi: Filius Dei sum?*

is less than (*minor*) the Father. Because He is less than (*minor*) the Father, He is consequently <not the Father>, but the Son.”¹³⁰ The two points Novatian raises to prove the distinction between the Father and the Son include the Father’s sanctifying activity and the statement that the Son is less than the Father. For Novatian, being less than the Father means being ontologically subordinate.

Novatian develops his idea of the preeminence of the Father over the Son with the concept of subjection. He continues his argument for the personal distinction of the Son in *Trin.* 27 by shifting to the ideas I have discussed above regarding the Son’s obedience and the fact that the Son is sent. He states, “The Father, however, was not sent, lest the Father, by being sent, would prove to be subject (*subditus*) to another god.”¹³¹ Novatian is not proposing that the Father’s nature (as he has defined it) could remain intact if the Father were sent. He is, instead, attacking the hypothetical suggestion, since he thinks that “being sent” contradicts the nature of the Supreme God.¹³² Unlike the Son, the Father cannot be subject to, obedient to, sent from, or less than a more supreme God. Novatian’s argument can only be understood if the Father’s attributes are supreme while the Son’s are not.¹³³ In this example, Novatian rejects the Son’s equality with the Father because the Son can be sent while the Father cannot.

¹³⁰ *Trin.* 27.12: Et sanctificatum se a suo Patre esse proponit. Dum ergo accipit sanctificationem a Patre, minor Patre est; minor autem Patre consequenter <non Pater> est, sed Filius. Novatian makes a parallel argument for Christ’s supremacy over the Holy Spirit in *Trin.* 16.3.

¹³¹ *Trin.* 27.13: Missus autem non fuit Pater, ne Pater subditus alteri Deo, dum mittitur, probaretur.

¹³² In fact, Novatian makes a parallel hypothetical argument about the Father and time in *Trin.* 2.2: “But if He began to exist after something else, He would be inferior (*infra*) to that previously existing thing; hence He would be found to be of lesser power (*minor potestate*), since designated as subsequent (*posterior*) even in time itself.”¹³² In this passage and the one preceding it, Novatian uses a similar logic about ontological inferiority which begins with the unique supremacy of the Father by definition of His divinity.

¹³³ Although this dissertation does not analyze Novatian’s theology of the Holy Spirit, it is worth pointing out that the logic which Novatian uses to proclaim the Father’s supremacy over the Son is paralleled in his description of the Son’s superiority over the Holy Spirit. See *Trin.* 16.3 for Novatian’s statement that Christ would be less than the Holy Spirit if he received from the Holy Spirit. It is well

The comments above clarify and enhance those which I have already made in relation to *Trin.* 31.3.¹³⁴ Novatian contrasts the Father, who has no origin and cannot be preceded by anything, to the Son, who owes his origin to the Father because of his birth. Therefore, the Son knows he is less (*minor*) than the Father, leading Novatian to conclude, “Although He has an origin (*originem*) inasmuch as He is born, yet through His Father He is, in a certain manner (*quodammodo*), like Him by birth (*nascitur*), because He is born of that Father, who alone has no origin.”¹³⁵ Novatian makes his case for the Son’s diminutive divine nature while advocating his X from X principle. He teaches that the Son is less than the Father because the Son has an origin and birth, two terms logically inapplicable to his theology of the Father.

Novatian’s use of the term *quodammodo* in *Trin.* 31.3 also qualifies his insistence on the X from X principle. The term suggests a likeness to God’s attributes rather than an equality. Two passages later, Novatian states, “God assuredly proceeded from God, constituting as Son the Second Person after the Father, but not taking from the Father that which makes Him one God (*quod unus est Deus*).”¹³⁶ My analysis in chapter 4 demands that the final phrase be a reference to the Father.¹³⁷ Novatian claims that X from X logic

known that Novatian never calls the Holy Spirit “God.” It appears that Novatian saw no biblical justification in making a similar case for the Holy Spirit’s divinity apart from his comments that the Spirit shares in heavenly power and is associated with divine eternity (*Trin.* 29.16). Since Novatian’s description of the powers and the nature of the Spirit are directed towards man’s capability in sharing in divine life, I am unconvinced by scholarly readings which suggest that Novatian’s association between the Holy Spirit and certain divine activities means that he would ever call the Holy Spirit “God” in the manner he does the Son.

¹³⁴ See the section in this chapter, “Novatian’s use of *semper* and *tempus*.”

¹³⁵ *Trin.* 31.3: quod necesse est prior sit qua Pater sit, quoniam antecedit necesse est eum qui habet originem ille qui originem nescit, simul ut hic minor sit, dum in illo esse se scit, habens originem quia nascitur et per Patrem quodammodo, quamvis originem habet qua nascitur, uicinus in natiuitate, dum ex eo Patre qui originem solus non habet nascitur.

¹³⁶ *Trin.* 31.5: Deus utique procedens ex Deo, secundam personam efficiens post Patrem, qua Filius, sed non eripiens illud Patri, quod unus est Deus.

¹³⁷ Novatian’s insistence that the Father alone is the one God sets him apart from predecessors, such as Tertullian and *Noet.*, who, at times, identify the term *Deus* with the unity of the Father, Son, and

means that God proceeded from God, but *quodammodo* in this case carries the sense that the Son's procession from the Father does not entail equality with the Supreme God's unique attributes.

Novatian develops his explanation of how the Son is less than the Father as he continues in *Trin.* 31. He declares that the Son is not the Father's equal when he compares a list of respective attributes. I wish to quote the following passage at length since Novatian piles together the Father and Son's distinctions in order to strike the reader with the weight of its cumulative effect. Novatian writes,

If he had not been born (*natus*), as unborn (*innatus*) He would have been compared with the Father who is unborn. Since an equality (*aequatione*) would have appeared in both, He would have constituted a second unborn, and therefore two gods. If He had not been begotten (*genitus*), He would have been placed side by side with Him who is not begotten. Since both would have been found to be equal (*aequales*), as unbegotten, they would accordingly have given us two gods; Christ, then, would have given rise to two gods. If He were, as the Father, without origin (*sine origine*), He Himself would also have proved to be, as the Father, the beginning (*principium*) of all things, making two beginnings (*principia*); consequently He would have also placed before us two gods. Again if He Himself were not the Son, but a Father begetting (*generans*) another son from Himself, then He would have been rightly compared with the Father and would have been shown to be as great (*et tantus denotus*) as the latter. Thus, He would have constituted two Fathers and approved also of two gods. If He had been invisible (*inuisibilis*), He would have been compared with Him who is invisible. He would have placed before us two invisibles; consequently He would have also permitted two gods. If He had been incomprehensible (*incomprehensibilis*), if He had also possessed whatever other attributes belong to the Father, then we assert that He would have certainly occasioned the controversy of two gods that these heretics raise. [*Trin.* 31.6-11, slightly altered]¹³⁸

Holy Spirit. Novatian's rejection of this tradition necessarily structures the way he speaks about the divine unity. See my comments in the section "The supreme God is one," in chapter 4. Some scholars have blended the idea of God's oneness and the idea of divine unity in a way which muddies Novatian's distinction. For an example of this confusion, see DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 168.

¹³⁸ Si enim natus non fuisset, innatus comparatus cum eo qui esset innatus, aequatione in utroque ostensa, duos faceret innatos et ideo duos faceret deos. Si non genitus esset, collatus cum eo qui genitus non esset et aequales inuenti, duos deos merito reddidissent non geniti atque ideo duos Christus reddidisset deos. Si sine origine esset ut Pater inuentus et ipse principium omnium ut Pater, duo faciens principia duos ostendisset nobis consequenter et deos. Aut si et ipse Filius non esset, sed Pater generans de se alterum filium, merito collatus cum Patre et tantus denotatus duos patres effecisset et ideo duos approbasset etiam

The Father and the Son, Novatian assures us, can not logically be equal, since two gods would then be proclaimed. Novatian sets the Son's birth, generation, origin, lack of generative experience, visibility,¹³⁹ and comprehensibility¹⁴⁰ against his presentation of the Father's attributes.¹⁴¹ However, Novatian also asserts the X from X principle for the effect of denying two gods. Novatian believes that he fully counters the charge of ditheism by combining his teaching that the Son shares the substance of the Father with his teaching that the Son is unequal to the Father in attributes.

Novatian's arguments against the profession of two Gods contain much in common with Tertullian's theology in *Herm.* In defending the Father's supremacy, Tertullian denies the possibility of two supreme beings sharing equal attributes.¹⁴²

Tertullian develops this logic when he describes the Trinity in terms of the Father sharing

deos. Si inuisibilis fuisset, cum inuisibili collatus par expressus duos inuisibiles ostendisset et ideo duos comprobasset et deos. Si incomprehensibilis, si et cetera quaecumque sunt Patris, merito, dicimus, duorum deorum quam isti confingunt controuersiam suscitasset.

¹³⁹ Novatian insists that theophanies prove the necessity of the Son's presence against the possibility of the Father's visibility. Regardless of any invisibility proper to the Son, like that of angels, Novatian distinguishes the Father as invisible from the Son who can be visible. See *Trin.* 18.13: "The only possible explanation that will render to God the Father His proper invisibility and to an angel His proper inferior position is to belief that no one but the Son of God, who is also God, was seen and hospitably received by Abraham." See too *Trin.* 28 which speaks about knowing the invisible Father through the Son who imitates His works. Keilbach views the distinctions Novatian makes between the invisibility of the Father and visibility of the Son central to his logic for making a personal distinction between the two, "Divinitas Filii," 104.

¹⁴⁰ Novatian does not entirely make it clear what he means by the Son's comprehensibility, however he does provide a useful contrast with the Father's incomprehensibility in *Trin.* 2.6 when he states, "Whatever can be thought about Him is less than He; whatever can be uttered about Him will be less than He when compared with Him. (Quicquid enim de illo cogitatum fuerit, minus ipso erit; et quicquid enuntiatum fuerit, minus illo comparatum circum ipsum erit.) See also *Trin.* 2.5 for God's preeminence over mind and speech.

¹⁴¹ Amann concludes from this passage the following: "[The Son] ne peut être mis à côté du Père comme un deuxième Dieu. C'est fort bien, dirons-nous, mais alors il n'est plus qu'un Dieu de seconde majesté; nous n'échappons au ditheïsme que pour tomber dans le subordinationisme... Tout n'est pas à rejeter cependant dans l'argumentation de Novatian. Son grand tort est seulement d'avoir mis les attributs de l'essence divine (*inuisibilis, incomprehensibilis*, etc.) sur le même pied que les propriétés personnelles," "Novatien et novatianisme," 827. According to my understanding of Novatian's theology, he must have connected attributes of essence to his understanding of the Word as person. Amann's distinction is a construct foreign to Novatian's thinking.

¹⁴² *Herm.* 4.5-6. Tertullian affirms the uniqueness and supremacy of the Father against the possibility that Matter is also eternal.

the divine substance with the Son and Spirit in his later works.¹⁴³ Novatian's comments in *Trin.* 31.6-11 follow the logic which Tertullian establishes in *Herm.*;¹⁴⁴ the X from X principle brings the assurance that the Son is God, but it negates the possibility that the Father divests those attributes which identify Him as supreme. The development in Tertullian's later works provided him the opportunity to equate the One God with the Father, Son, and Spirit in a way which Novatian completely avoids.¹⁴⁵

Another way of gaining insight into Novatian's doctrine of the inequality of the Father and Son can be found in his treatment of Phil. 2:6-11.¹⁴⁶ Novatian confirms that the Father offers the Son divine supremacy over the creation, and he begins *Trin.* 22 by quoting Phil. 2:6-11.¹⁴⁷ His explanation of how the Son is in the form of God sheds light on his understanding of the Philippians hymn as a whole. He begins by stating that

¹⁴³ E.g. *Prax.* 12: "And if he himself is God, as John says—the *Word was God*—you have two, one commanding a thing to be made, another making it. But how you must understand 'another' I have already professed, in the sense of person, not of substance, for distinctiveness, not for division. Yet although I always maintain one substance in three who cohere, I must still, as a necessary consequence of the meaning <of the passage>, say that he who commands is other than he who makes. For he would not be commanding if he himself were making while commanding things to be made."

¹⁴⁴ Some differences between Tertullian's Trinitarian theology and Novatian's theology of the Father and Son have already been noted. However, I understand the differences in their theology concerning the Holy Spirit to be far more significant than many scholars. I believe much more work must be done on Novatian's understanding of Tertullian's writings and the influence those writings had on his theology.

¹⁴⁵ See again chapter 4's section, "The supreme God is one."

¹⁴⁶ Papandrea sees Philippians 2:6-11 as "the most important New Testament passage for Novatian, since it is the only one he interprets at length which he does not claim to be rescuing from a heterodox interpretation, and therefore it is a text which he has chosen for himself, rather than being pressed to interpret it for polemical reasons," *Trinitarian Theology*, 268. I am less inclined to see the same degree of importance in light of the fact that Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and others discuss it.

¹⁴⁷ *Trin.* 22.1: "Who though He was in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal to God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even to death, the death of the Cross. Therefore God also has exalted Him exceedingly, and has bestowed upon Him the name that is above every name; so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that the Lord Jesus is in the glory of God the Father." (*Qui cum in forma Dei esset, non rapinam arbitratus est aequalem se Deo esse, sed semetipsum exinaniuit formam serui accipiens, in similitudine hominum factus et habitu inuentus ut homo; humiliavit se oboediens factus usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis; propterea et Deus illum superexaltauit et dedit illi nomen quod est super omne nomen, ut in nomine Iesu omne genu flectatur caelestium, terrestrium et infernorum et omnis lingua confiteatur quoniam Dominus Iesus in gloria est Dei Patris?*)

“[Christ] alone is the first and of noble birth (*generosus*) before all others: the Son of God, the Word of God, the Imitator of all His Father’s works. Inasmuch as He also works as His Father does, He is, as we have said, in the form (*forma*) of God the Father.”¹⁴⁸ He goes on to explain that the Son is,

declared to be in the form of God, because He is above all things, holds divine authority (*diuinam potestatem*) over every creature, and is God after the likeness of the Father (*exemplo Patris*). However, He received this from His own Father, that He might be both God and Lord of all and God according to the form of God the Father, begotten and brought forth from Him. [*Trin.* 22.4]¹⁴⁹

Here, Novatian blends the teachings concerning the X from X principle with the Father’s impartation of power and authority over creation to the Son. In speaking of the Son as in the form of God, Novatian explains that he is simultaneously identifying the Son’s birth from the Father, the Son’s performance of the same works as the Father, and the Son’s authority over all of creation as the Father has given it to him.¹⁵⁰

When Novatian comes to his explanation of the phrase *non rapinam arbitratus est aequalem se Deo esse* (Phil. 2:6) in *Trin.* 22.5,¹⁵¹ he stresses the Father’s giving of divinity to the Son:

¹⁴⁸ *Trin.* 22.3: hic praecipuus atque generosus prae omnibus Dei Filius, uerbum Dei, imitator omnium paternorum operum, dum et ipse operatur sicut et Pater eius, forma, ut expressimus, est Dei Patris.

¹⁴⁹ Et merito in forma pronuntiatus est Dei, dum et ipse super omnia et omnis creaturae diuinam obtinens potestatem et Deus est exemplo Patris, hoc ipsum tamen a Patre proprio consecutus, ut omnium et Deus esset et Dominus esset, et Deus ad formam Dei Patris ex ipso genitus atque prolatus. Fausset believes that the Son’s reception of divinity and lordship indicates “a strong assertion of the subordination of the Son,” *Novatiani Romanae*, 81 n. 12. Cf. D’Alès, who argues that the divine nature is equal. The giving and reception of divinity mark the distinct persons rather than alter the divine nature, *Novatien*, 116-117. This is the position of Papandrea, *Trinitarian Theology*, 270.

¹⁵⁰ I am not convinced by Papandrea’s suggestion that Novatian uses *forma* as a synonym for *substantia* in light of *Trin.* 22. I also disagree with his conclusion that for Novatian “to say that Christ was *in forma Dei*, is tantamount to asserting that He is consubstantial with the Father,” *Trinitarian Theology*, 269. Papandrea’s point is to argue equality when he says “consubstantial,” which is a term that I think oversimplifies Novatian’s theology. Mattei argues that the unity of substance manifests itself as demiurgic activity as well as the divine activity throughout history, “*De Trinitate* 31,” 220-228.

¹⁵¹ Some scholars have cited this phrase as likely holding an important key to understanding Novatian’s teaching regarding the ontological equality of the Son with the Father. See Fausset, *Novatiani Romanae*, 81-81; DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 103; and Papandrea, *Trinitarian Theology*, 268-274, esp. 270 n. 361. Papandrea places the greatest emphasis on the term *rapinam*. He renders the phrase in

For though He was ever mindful that He was God of God the Father, He never compared (*comparauit*) or ranked (*contulit*) Himself with God the Father, knowing that He is of His Father; and this very thing (that He is) He had, because the Father had given (*dedisset*) it to Him. Hence, not only before He took upon Himself the flesh but even after He had taken a body, and again, after His Resurrection, He rendered and still renders complete obedience (*oboedientiam*) to His Father in all things. Consequently, this proves that He never regarded His divinity (*diuinitatem*) as a means of unlawfully arrogating (*rapinum*) to Himself equality (*aequaret*) with God the Father. [*Trin.* 22.5-6, modified slightly]¹⁵²

Novatian relies on the obedience of the Son before, during, and after the Incarnation to state that the Son does not claim equality with the Father.¹⁵³ In *Trin.* 27, Novatian contrasts these ideas with the argument that the Father's attributes would be jeopardized if He were subject to another. In this regard, the Son's obedience to his Father in all his works and activities, spoken of in the passage above, manifests one aspect of the Son's inequality with the Father.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the implicit topics of the Son's visibility and his ability to be located in a place, in this case in relation to Novatian's comments about

question, "did not consider equality with God to be a prize." Papandrea's argument is that Novatian acknowledges that the Son knows his equality with the Father. The Son recognizes the causal priority of the Father, which for Novatian, according to Papandrea, entails the only aspect of subordination. I do not think that Papandrea pays enough attention to the fact that Novatian does not explain *rapinam* specifically. Novatian chooses to describe how the Son is in the form of God in *Trin.* 22 and speaks about the subject of equality in other passages. When he does comment on this phrase, as I write above, he simply acknowledges the Son's awareness of his derivation from the Father and subsequent lower rank. For a summary of the positions of Keilbach, Petavius, Ginoulhiac, Fausset, D'Alès, Galtier, and Prat, see DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 108-113 and also his "Again the Kenosis," 91-96. In the latter work, DeSimone abandons his earlier view that Novatian teaches the Son's ontological subordination in his exegesis of Phil. 2:6-11.

¹⁵² Quamuis enim se ex Deo Patre Deum esse meminisset, numquam se Deo Patri aut comparauit aut contulit, memor se esse ex suo Patre et hoc ipsum, quod est, habere se, quia Pater dedisset. Inde denique et ante carnis assumptionem, sed et post assumptionem corporis, post ipsam praeterea resurrectionem omnem Patri in omnibus rebus oboedientiam praestitit partier ac praestat. Ex quo probatur numquam arbitratum illum esse rapinam quondam diuinitatem, ut aequaret se Patri Deo.

¹⁵³ Because of this point, Keilbach suggests that Novatian may be speaking about the Son's ontological subordination, "Divinitas Filii," 215.

¹⁵⁴ Compare P. Grelot who discusses Novatian's use of Phil. 2:6-7 as suggesting the equality of the Son's divinity with the Father by virtue of his being in the form of God prior to the *kenosis*. Grelot then argues that Novatian uses the passage from Philippians to speak about the Son as God through the language of condition and obedience, rather than through the language of a shared essence, in "La traduction et l'interprétation de Ph 2,6-7. Quelques éléments d'enquête patristique." *NRTh* 9-10 (1971): 907-908.

the Incarnation in this passage, point to another aspect of the Son's inequality with the Father.

I will conclude this chapter by citing and commenting on one text about the Father, which sets the topics related to the Son's divinity in greater relief. Novatian writes,

God always stays in His own state (*semper status suus*), ever without the loss of change (*sine detrimento*), He is always both the same (*similis*) as and equal (*aequalis*) to Himself. Truly, what is not born (*natum*) cannot be changed (*mutari potest*); for only those things which are made (*fiunt*) or born (*gignuntur*) come into change (*conuersionem*), while those things which at one time did not exist, they come to be by being born (*nascendo*), and so for this reason to be born is to be changed (*conuerti*). But truly anything which has neither birth nor maker, excludes change from itself, since it has no origin (*originem*), which is the cause of change (*conuersionis*). [*Trin.* 4.7, Papandrea's translation, slightly modified]¹⁵⁵

We recall from chapter 4 that Novatian (in this passage as well as in *Trin.* 4.4) speaks of the Father's "equality with Himself" to affirm that the Father cannot change, since change has to do with a beginning or birth.¹⁵⁶ The theological framework by which Novatian contrasts the attributes of the Son begin with the principles mentioned in the above quotation: the Father cannot have a birth or an origin or be changed in any way. This, according to Novatian makes the Father, "always both the same (*similis*) as and equal (*aequalis*) to Himself." While Novatian proclaims the Son to be invested with the authority and power of the Father, he never strays from his emphasis on the Father as the one God who possesses a unique nature. The Father's nature is incompatible with birth, time, place, visibility, etc., which are all attributes that Novatian links to the Son. For this

¹⁵⁵ Deo manet semper status suus, dum sine detrimento commutationis semper sui et similis et aequalis est. Quod enim natum non est, nec mutari potest; ea enim sola in conuersionem ueniunt, quaecumque fiunt uel quaecumque gignuntur, dum quae aliquando non fuerant discunt esse nascendo atque ideo nascendo conuerti. At enim illa quae nec natiuitatem habent nec artificem, exc!userunt a se demutationem, dum in qua conuersionis causa est non habent originem.

¹⁵⁶ In chapter 4's section, "*Aeternus* and *aeternitatis*: immortality and incorruptibility," I pointed out that both Irenaeus, in *Haer.* 2.13.3, and Apuleius, *Dogm. Plat.* 1.6, used similar phrasing.

reason, Novatian states that the Son's "divinity is so presented to us that it may not appear either through discordancy or through equality (*aequalitate*) in the Godhead, that there he has produced two Gods."¹⁵⁷ Novatian rejects the Son's ontological equality with the Father in all cases.

Conclusion

My reading of Novatian differs from those of other scholars because of the emphasis I place on Novatian's incorporation of technical, philosophical terminology of ontology and divine attributes. By treating Novatian's philosophically-indebted theology of the Father as the framework for his theology of the Son, I have demonstrated two primary features of *Trin.* First, I have shown that the Novatian accepts the Son's divinity, in large part because of the ontological connection between the Father and Son. Second, I have shown that Novatian understands the Father's supremacy and uniqueness as making the thought of the Son's ontological equality impossible.

Scholars who have portrayed Novatian's theology of the Son as simultaneously suggesting the Son's ontological subordination and equality have overestimated Novatian's insistence that the Son is God to mean ontological equality. Those scholars who have argued that Novatian only presents the Son's ontological equality with the Father have not fully accounted for Novatian's insistence that the Son's attributes are less than those of the Father, or for Novatian's insistence on the uniqueness and supremacy of the Father. Those scholars who share my view that Novatian treats the Son as ontologically subordinate to the Father have never offered a detailed study of Novatian's

¹⁵⁷ *Trin.* 31.18: Cuius sic diuinitas traditur, ut non aut dissonantia aut aequalitate diuinitatis duos deos reddidisse uideatur. In this passage, I am following Petitmengin's replacement of *inaequalitate* with *aequalitate*.

critical debt to a philosophical understanding of the Father's divine nature. This study has attempted to close all of the gaps in scholarship mentioned above by showing that Novatian's theology of the Son consistently can be best understood as maintaining the Son's ontological subordination to the Father.

Conclusion

This study has argued that Novatian uses philosophical, technical language to describe the Father's divine nature and attributes. He presents the Father as both supreme and unique. In so doing, Novatian depends on a flourishing philosophical tradition of negative theology as well as Christian traditions about the Father's nature. These Christian traditions also reflect strong ties to philosophical accounts of ontology and expressions of divine attributes. Furthermore, I have shown that Novatian's theology of the Son does not attempt to make the Son ontologically equal to the Father. In expressing the Son's ontological subordination, Novatian utilizes important aspects of the Word Christology tradition, which I discussed in chapter 5. According to Novatian, the Son possesses attributes which are less than those of the Father, even though much of *Trin.* functions to prove that the Son is rightfully called "God."

This dissertation challenged the interpretations of two groups of scholars. One group includes those believing Novatian's theology of the Son is inherently contradictory. These scholars say that Novatian sometimes affirms the Son's ontological subordination to the Father, while at other times he seems to suggest the Son's ontological equality with the Father. In most cases, I have agreed with the examples these scholars point to as supporting the Son's ontological subordination. I have also offered arguments as to why passages, which have been taken to refer to ontological equality, ought to be read as supporting his teaching of the Son's ontological subordination. There are two prevailing judgments among scholars in this group as to his supposed theological contradictions. The first is that Novatian is philosophically unsophisticated and does not fully grasp the contradictions in his writing. The second

lays the blame for his supposed inconsistencies on his failed ability to transcend the historical limitations of the Word Christology tradition known to him. My study has shown that both of these approaches misread Novatian's work. *Trin.* is, in fact, philosophically sophisticated, and Novatian avoids those aspects of the Word Christology tradition which he could have utilized to suggest the Son's ontological equality with the Father. The Father and Son, however, are not ontologically equal according to Novatian, and he carefully builds a theological framework which challenges such a teaching.

P. Mattei and J. Papandrea have offered the newest interpretations of Novatian's theology, which consist of arguments that *Trin.* teaches the ontological equality of the Father and the Son. They explain passages in *Trin.* suggestive of ontological subordination in two principal ways. First, they make the case that Novatian's statements concerning the Son's lesser status relate to the Son having His origin from the Father. These scholars believe that Novatian offers only a distinction in the divine nature of the Father and Son based on an Aristotelian principle of logical causality.¹ The Father's logical primacy is not taken to reflect the Son's ontological subordination. The second way these scholars address the statements of inequalities is by suggesting that the Son is subordinate in relation to the dealings with the creation. To make the case that there is a form of "economic" subordination, Papandrea emphasizes the Son's *kenosis* while Mattei dwells on implications of the Father's hierarchical position above the obedient Son. My reading of *Trin.* challenges these perspectives by arguing that Novatian consistently demarcates the divine nature of the Father from that of the Son. His philosophical

¹ Like other scholars, DeSimone and Fausset also point to the importance of the Father as the origin or source of the Son, although they do not develop this theme to the extent which Papandrea does. See DeSimone, *Treatise of Novatian*, 103; Fausset, *Novatiani Romanae*, xxxiii-xxxiv.

commitments to the Father's supremacy and uniqueness can be seen in his presentation of the Father's relationship to space and time. The reading Papandrea and Mattei suggest makes Novatian's theology of the Father and the theology of the Son convoluted and inconsistent.

My study has not emphasized the work of those scholars who have shared my opinion that Novatian teaches the Son's ontological subordination to the Father. These works came before those of Papandrea and Mattei (and thus have not been able to respond to them),² and they have not offered a serious treatment of the presence of technical, philosophical terminology in Novatian's theology of the Father or the Son. Therefore, my study is unique in that it offers a new contextualization of Novatian's thought in light of philosophical and Christian influences.

The applications of this project's conclusions are, I hope, far reaching. As noted in the Introduction, I originally intended to treat Novatian's Christological anthropology as well as his eschatology. My interpretation that Novatian teaches the Son's ontological subordination affects my reading of both topics, and I would like briefly to address these topics.³ When looking to Novatian's Christological anthropology, I understand the Son's ontological subordination to be the clearest justification for Novatian's formulation of the Son's ability to interact with the world. As noted in my study, Novatian treats such an ability as impossible for the transcendent Father. Novatian distinguishes the nature of the

² The scholarship of Tixeront, Amann, Prat, and Peterson appeared in 1952 or before. Loi and Pollard published in the 1970's. Although Simonetti's latest work on Novatian was published in the same year (1996) as Mattei's "*De Trinitate* 31," it appears that Simonetti did not have a chance to interact with it.

³ I also mention in chapter 6, in the section "All things are through the Word: demiurgic activity," that Novatian appears to be exegesis Rom. 11:36 in a manner similar to traditions of Eph. 4:6. The primary difference is that it appears Novatian is removing a Trinitarian emphasis in his interpretation. It is my belief that Novatian does not call the Holy Spirit "God" in *Trin.* because he has neither the Scriptural warrant nor the philosophical justification for doing so. In a future study, I hope to make the case that Novatian does not teach something which can be called a Trinitarian theology, because he does not see the Holy Spirit as being categorized as divine in the way he sees the Son as divine.

Father from that of the Son to demonstrate, on the one hand, that he is speaking of two, distinct persons; on the other hand, the Son's lesser divine nature is precisely the avenue by which Novatian addresses the incarnation. The union between the divine and human during the incarnation is, by definition of the Father's nature as Supreme God, not applicable to the Father. According to my analysis of Novatian's consistent use of philosophical principles, his Christological anthropology should be discussed in light of the Son's lesser divine nature.

Novatian's theology also includes a strong doctrine of an eschatological vision.⁴ His affirmation of man's future hope in an eschatological vision sounds similar to the position held by Irenaeus.⁵ At the same time, Novatian also appears to be repudiating Tertullian's dismissal of such a vision.⁶ It is my opinion that Novatian's teaching of the Son's ontological subordination affects his perspective on man's eschatological vision. Although Novatian reserves a superlative meaning for terms such as *aeternus* to the Father alone, he applies this term and others to man in light of a future hope of sharing eternal life with God. My reading of *Trin.* shows the philosophical justifications for Novatian's ability to cross-apply the Father's attributes in a diminished sense, first to the Son and then to others. Man's metaphysical closeness to the transcendent God is something which grows with time and only because of the work of the ontologically subordinate Son (as well as the work of the Spirit). Novatian expresses this concept, in part, with his teaching about an eschatological vision.

⁴ Novatian claims that man can anticipate seeing the Father in *Trin.* 28.5-6.

⁵ Irenaeus, for example, speaks about a final vision of the Father in *Haer.* 4.20.5,

⁶ Tertullian speaks of the Father as always being invisible (see *Prax.* 16). Novatian, however, claims that man can anticipate seeing the Father in *Trin.* 28.5-6.

Above all, Novatian's theology emphasizes the Father's supreme, unique, and transcendent nature. This study offers a reevaluation of Novatian's dependence on philosophy, especially Middle Platonism. Novatian, however, was in no way just a Middle Platonist, clothing his philosophy in Christian garb. His Christian beliefs are the core of his thinking, and those beliefs are reflected in all aspects of his theology. What I believe we can say is that Novatian accepted certain suggestions of the Son's ontological subordination to the Father in the Word Christology tradition and that he added philosophical depth to an articulation of that position.

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